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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE NOVELS OF GEORGE GISSING:
PHASES OF A DEVELOPING ARTISTRY

by

SIDNEY RICHARD MACGILLIVRAY ©

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
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EDMONTON, ALBERTA

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled "The Novels of George Gissing: Phases of a Developing Artistry" submitted by Sidney Richard MacGillivray in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dedication

To Nancy, who never doubted

Abstract

From the evidence of such studies as exist of the works of George Gissing, it is obvious that too many critics have agreed with Virginia Woolf's comment that Gissing is one of those novelists whom we approach "through their lives as much as through their work." Almost all the serious studies of Gissing's work have placed an undue emphasis on the autobiographical element. However, after 1895 Gissing was widely regarded as one of Britain's foremost living novelists, and so it is equally obvious that his novels deserve to be considered as the works of art that they are.

This thesis examines the structural aspects of a representative selection of Gissing's novels. What emerges from the study is evidence that Gissing's notions about an appropriate structure for his novels underwent a fundamental change from the earlier novels to the later ones. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that this change was a deliberate and self-conscious one. One of the principal contentions of this study is that Gissing was a self-conscious and developing artist, and not merely a novelist who indulged in fictive autobiography.

In order to trace this developing artistry, the first chapter expounds the materials and themes to be found in

the novels of George Gissing in order to demonstrate that while the subject matter remains relatively constant, the method of presenting that subject matter does not. This chapter also tries to establish the language of analysis used later in discussing the novels themselves. The following chapters analyze closely a representative selection of the novels based on aspects of their structure. The study concludes with an evaluation of the types of structure examined and necessarily an evaluation of the novels themselves.

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Introduction

Until quite recently it was a critical commonplace that there is a dearth of material about George Gissing. In his lifetime Gissing himself often complained about the small number of those who read his books and the even smaller number who understood them. Those who have been anxious to keep interest in Gissing alive have repeated the complaint in various forms for more than seventy years. Neglect of Gissing is cited as recently as June, 1970,[1] and neglect is at least implied in the title of the even more recently published, The Rediscovery of George Gissing.[2] Yet the truth of the matter is that on the whole Gissing has not been neglected. Even during his lifetime each of his novels was reviewed with vigour if not always with acute perception. Among his known reviewers, H. G. Wells wrote sympathetic, indeed sometimes laudatory criticism, and, as Jacob Korg points out, in 1897 a leading periodical of the day rated Gissing as one of the three foremost living British novelists.[3] To the present time there have been numerous articles and notes in scholarly journals and magazines, more than a dozen books, several theses and dissertations, at least two exhibitions of Gissing memorabilia, several collections of letters, a number of reprints of the novels, and two collections of the lesser known Gissing essays and short stories. Indeed, Joseph Wolff's George Gissing: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings About Him lists almost twelve hundred items published on Gissing and his work between 1880 and 1970.[4] Finally, there has been the ultimate criterion of academic respectability, the establishment of a periodical devoted specifically to Gissing studies, The Gissing Newsletter.[5] All of this interest, especially in the past few years, has prompted two of the day's leading Gissing scholars to comment:

> Since the half-centenary of Gissing's death few, if any, late Victorian writers have been the subject of such intensive scholarly attention.[6]

Clearly, Gissing has not lacked attention, but the kind of attention he has received is another matter. The publication of various collections of letters and reminiscences, such as those by Edward Clodd and H. G. Wells,[7] provides indispensable source material for the study of Gissing's life and personality. Indeed, it can be argued that most of the books about Gissing, from the thinly disguised The Private Life of Henry Maitland by Morley Roberts to the more recent George Gissing, A Critical Biography by Jacob Korg, have been biographically oriented. It seems evident that most of Gissing's critics have agreed with Virginia Woolf's statement that Gissing is one of those writers whom one approaches through their lives as much as through their work.[8] The problem with this approach for someone with an interest in the work is that the focus is on the writer, and the work, when treated at all, is seen to be important only insofar as it may cast light on the personality of the writer. Even when critical interest is centred on the writer and the main thrust is to elucidate factual material, the results have not always been entirely satisfactory, as Jacob Korg's review of M. C. Donnelly's George Gissing, Grave Comedian shows.[9] In the few book-length studies which are not biographically oriented the topics have ranged from studies of specific influences on the writer's work, such as Samuel Gapp's George Gissing, Classicist,[10] to studies of Gissing's treatment of the various issues which occupied the late Victorian mind, such as Gerhard Hassler's Die Darstellung der Frau bei George Gissing.[11]

The numerous journal and magazine articles have ranged in importance from the merely trivial to significant but limited studies of certain aspects of individual novels. In each case these studies can be described as biographical, historical, philosophical, political, or even sociological. On the whole, the various theses and dissertations can be categorized in the same way.[12]

It seems clear that while there has been much written about Gissing, there has been curiously little concern about his novels as novels. That is to say, there is a dearth of material about Gissing's novels as art. At least part of this kind of neglect is deliberate. Gissing's recent and in some respects his most able biographer and critic, Jacob

Korg, has decided that Gissing's novels are best considered on other than æsthetic grounds.[13] And Korg is not alone in this view. However, as ample evidence shows, Gissing himself was greatly preoccupied with the question of the novel as art,[14] and more specifically he was concerned about the artistic merit of his own novels. In 1883 he wrote to his brother:

> I am by degrees getting my right place in the world . . . . My attitude henceforth is that of the artist pure and simple. The world is for me a collection of phenomena, which are to be studied and reproduced artistically. In the midst of the most serious complications of life, I suddenly find myself possessed with a great calm, withdrawn as it were from the immediate interests of the moment, and able to regard everything as a picture. I watch and observe myself just as much as others. The impulse to regard every juncture as a "situation" becomes stronger and stronger. In the midst of desperate misfortune I can pause to make a note for future use, and the afflictions of others are to me materials for observation. This, I rather think, is at last the final stage of my development, coming after so many and various stages. Brutal and egoistic it would be called by most people. What has that to do with me, if it is a fact?[15]

In 1887 he wrote to his sister:

> In truth I think of very little but Art, pure and simple, and all my work is profoundly pessimistic as far as mood goes. Never mind, if I live another ten years, there shall not be many contemporary novelists ahead of me, for I am only beginning my work. Thirty years of age this coming November. Well, Scott and Thackeray did not begin till they were forty, and did a vast deal after that. I don't know where you will find room for my books by that time.[16]

Two years later to the same sister he wrote:

> As to The Nether World, it is not easy for me to realise the horror it seems to excite in you. Of course I am not in the habit of thinking of it in that way; to me the first thing is vigour of artistic treatment, and your words seem to imply that you appreciated that. My acquaintances in general seem to think it is the best work I have yet done.[17]

To his friend, Eduard Bertz, Gissing commented on a recently published novel by Mrs. Humphry Ward:

> Her method is precisely what mine was when I wrote 'Workers in the Dawn.' Of course she has a mature mind, and wide knowledge; but artistically I believe she is at the very point I had reached, after study of George Eliot, some ten years ago.[18]

As a final indication, if certain of Waymark's sentiments in The Unclassed can be taken to reflect Gissing's own attitude, as has been averred by some critics,[19] the novels should be appreciated not only for their social realism but also for their artistic merit. Speaking to his friend, Julian Casti, Waymark says of his work:

> "If only people can be got to read it. Yet I care nothing for that aspect of the thing. Is it artistically strong? Is it good as a picture? There was a time when I might have written in this way with a declared social object. That is all gone by. I have no longer a spark of social enthusiasm. Art is all I now care for, and as art I wish my work to be judged."[20]

Even if some allowance has to be made for a certain degree of self-dramatization, Gissing the novelist was concerned about the novels as novels. He was concerned, however, not only in a general way about the novels as works of art; he was concerned more specifically about that aspect of his novels which he referred to as their "form" or their "construction."[21] It is in connection with this aspect of the novelist's art that some of Gissing's critics have been most condemnatory, contenting themselves for the most part with a few deprecatory phrases and generally dismissing the subject as not worthy of serious consideration.[22] But for Gissing the question of a novel's structure was a problem to which he addressed himself throughout his writing career. Again, his personal correspondence provides the clearest indication of his concern. In 1885 he wrote to his sister:

> I have finished a third of the first volume of _Demos_, with much toil and endless rewriting. It is more elaborate than anything I have done yet, and the plot has cost me hours of construction, so that I have scarcely done any reading of late.[23]

In 1886 he wrote to another sister:

> I am toiling fearfully over the construction of a new book, and fear I shall not begin the actual writing for a week or so yet.[24]

In 1892 he wrote to his friend, Bertz:

> Now for "Denzil Quarrier." I am glad indeed that you had nothing worse to say of it. Strangely, it has been very well received; the _Times_ gave a prominent notice the other day. People seem to think it psychologically interesting. I wish you could have liked

> Eustace Glazzard. I thought the man painfully human. However, it is very good that you think I am progressing in the matter of form.[25]

Finally, in response to an appreciative article by H. G. Wells, detailing some of the structural aspects of Gissing's novels,[26] Gissing wrote:

> Admirably written this same article; I wish I had half the critical ability which you show throughout. Of course I read with peculiar interest, and at times with peculiar feeling; but the sum of it all is that I believe you have seen justly and spoken as it behooved you to do. I have always been drearily conscious of the immaturity discoverable in all my work; the worst of it is, I cannot hope with you that I shall make much more progress. I lack the vital energy that would justify such a hope; what I have is frittered away in mean squabbling and sordid cares.--But you know all about that.[27]

It seems abundantly clear that not only was Gissing concerned about his novels as art in a general way, he was specifically concerned about their structure. As a novelist, this was a crucial problem which Gissing had to confront throughout his writing career.

More cognizant of his failures than of his successes, Gissing's correspondence throughout his writing career reveals the self-conscious artist struggling with the æsthetic demands of the novel. The novels themselves bear ample testimony to Gissing's often agonizing efforts to refine his techniques and to satisfy his own æsthetic sense. It is in this context that this study addresses itself to some of the structural aspects of Gissing's novels, an area which has received scant critical attention. Further, it seems only just to accord the kind of attention to a writer's work that the writer himself sought. Finally, a clear understanding of the structural principles of a writer's work leads to a more clear understanding and thus a more just appreciation of the work itself. This kind of approach to Gissing's novels conduces more to an understanding of the novels and of a developing artistry than do those approaches based on the premise that his novels are interesting only as various examples of fictionalized autobiography or as exercises in the _Tendenzroman_.

As a necessary prelude to such a study, the first part of Chapter I expounds the materials and themes of Gissing's novels in order to show that while the subject matter remains relatively constant, the method of presenting that material does not. The second part of this chapter endeavours to establish the language of analysis to be used in discussing the novels. The next two chapters, divided into two parts each, deal with the best known and most frequently discussed Gissing novels. In the first part of each of these chapters a selection of novels is presented and the reasons for this grouping are given. In the second part of each chapter, a single novel, the best of its particular group based on structural considerations, is subjected to detailed analysis. Chapter IV follows the same pattern except that two novels--_New Grub Street_ and _The Whirlpool_--

are examined in the second part of the chapter. The study concludes with an evaluation of the novels based on the strength of their æsthetic qualities.

The evidence indicates that Gissing's novels deserve to be studied on bases other than that which posits them as exercises in self-confession. This work, itself limited to a particular course of enquiry, touches at various points other possible areas of study which, if pursued, will enable critics to base judgment of Gissing's work on more purely literary considerations. The publication in recent years of various collections of letters, for example, suggests that the question of Gissing's relationships with his publishers and the effect that these had on his novels is worthy of investigation. Equally fruitful would be a careful consideration--going beyond the usual commonplaces of Gissing criticism--of the literary influence of such writers as Turgenev, Daudet, De Maupassant and George Moore. Further, consideration might well be given to the question of Gissing's success as a writer in the development of his art in comparison to the developing artistry of such contemporaries as Hardy, Conrad and James.

It is only with enquiries such as these that study of Gissing's work can proceed on a more obviously literary basis and a more just appreciation of the novels as literature be determined. The present study aims to be a firm step in that direction.

Chapter I

Prolegomenon

1. Materials and Themes

Throughout his career as a novelist George Gissing was preoccupied with a number of the issues which had captured the attention of his age. The place of woman in society, or the "woman question" as it was sometimes called, education, marriage, the relationship between parents and children, socio-political change, industrialism, the increasing commercialization of daily life, the place of the artist in society, the church, an increasingly strident imperialism, and, above all, the position of the sensitive young individual with good intellect but little money and therefore no appropriate social position, are Gissing's chief concerns. Since, however, almost all the writers of the late Victorian period were concerned about many of the same issues, it is only with respect to the question of the young individual with more sensitivity and intelligence than money that, as Donald Stone points out, Gissing may be said to have contributed anything that was uniquely his own to the concerns of the age.[1] Naturally enough over the entire body of his published novels--from Workers in the Dawn to Will

Warburton--each of these issues is not treated with equally compelling force in each novel. Some novels are more obviously concerned with certain specific issues than are others. The Odd Women, for example, is concerned primarily with the place of women in society, especially those who either cannot get married or who on principle refuse to do so. New Grub Street provides a searching examination of what the young writer of the day had to subject himself to as he sought to achieve success in the publishing world. But in these novels, as in the rest, Gissing's other concerns are heard, if only in muted notes.

While there is an obvious danger in attributing the views of fictive characters to their creator, there is less danger in Gissing's case than there is, say, in the case of George Eliot, or of Dickens. Such internal evidence as is offered by the novels themselves in the forms of the manipulation of characters, the handling of incident, the commentary offered by the narrator--that is to say, the evidence presented by the total context of meaning--provides the careful reader with plenty of information about the writer's views on any given issue. Add to this such corroborative external evidence as is provided by the several collections of letters to various correspondents, personal reminiscences, and the various essays, and the reader of a Gissing novel finds that he can discern Gissing's feelings on a given matter fairly readily.

Although many another Victorian writer wrote about it, few other Victorian writers were more clearly and consistently concerned about the place of woman in society than George Gissing. From his first published novel to his last, Gissing explored such questions as the nature of courtship, marriage, male-female sexual mores, and the particular problems of the unmarried woman. For the most part, Gissing seems to have felt that courtships tended to be too brief and too much filled with idealistic persiflage to provide the kind of opportunity that mature individuals about to be married need in order to get to know one another. The marital misery of the Reardons (*New Grub Street*) and of the Peacheys (*In the Year of Jubilee*), to cite only two examples, are attributed in part to the fact that the respective couples had not had time to get to know one another sufficiently before the fateful ceremony. Disparities in temperament, differences in goals, and differences in expectations are all too often hidden, it is suggested, only to emerge in the stresses of married life; and then they lead to conflict and marital discord. Happy marriages--rarities in a Gissing novel--such as those of the Vissians (*Isabel Clarendon*) and the Mortons (*The Whirlpool*) are seen to be predicated on mutual respect and an understanding which is given a chance to develop before the lifelong commitment is made. The marriage of Piers Otway and Irene Derwent (*The Crown of Life*) takes place only after the couple have grown together in mutual love and understanding.

Of even more interest than the misery which is endemic to unhappy marriages based on little more than sexual attraction, such as that of the Rolfes (The Whirlpool), or on a fear of having to live alone, such as that of the Widdowsons (The Odd Women), is Gissing's presentation of the problems of the unmarried woman whose social position is not, thereby, clearly defined. If she has money or access to money and is so inclined, she can engage in deeds of public philanthropy as do Ida Starr (The Unclassed) and Miss Lant (The Nether World). If, like Mrs. Ormond (Thyrza), she is more inclined to devote herself to an individual case, she may try to shape the circumstances of one life rather than many. But, again, women in such a position are numerically rare in Gissing's work. Much more usual is the case of the single woman who must rely on her own devices to survive. If she is able to make herself useful as a companion for a relative or a close friend, she may well be able to maintain some sense of self-respect and dignity, although she may have to pay a high price for her position. Maud Enderby (The Unclassed) becomes a companion to her eccentric aunt and like her succumbs to a dessicating religiosity. If a woman has a social position above that of the working poor but has no money and no one to whom she can turn, she may, as so many seem to have done, become a governess. Emily Hood (A Life's Morning) uses her position as a governess to escape the socially confining environment in which she was born. Thus, in this case, the position serves to provide for her material needs and at the same time provides her with a sense of social dignity.[2] If a woman has some social status but no material considerations to recommend her and no chance to become a governess, she might like Eve Madeley (Eve's Ransom) and Alma Frothingham (The Whirlpool), have a chance to become a rich man's mistress. If a woman is from the class of the working poor, she is likely to have little recourse but to become a prostitute and an alcoholic like Carrie Mitchell (Workers in the Dawn) and Lottie Starr (The Unclassed). In this it will be seen that Gissing shared the view of a number of others that prostitution in the Victorian age was a direct result of the prevailing economic conditions.[3] Throughout his career, Gissing presented with unwavering sympathy the pitiable plight of such women.

The relatively recent phenomenon, the unmarried woman who deliberately decides to establish a sense of her own identity by refusing to marry, Gissing deals with principally in The Emancipated, Born in Exile, and The Odd Women. In The Emancipated it is Cecily Doran who receives an education which is designed to inculcate in her those values which will enable her to make wise choices for herself throughout her life and to realize thereby her full potential as a woman and an individual. That she eventually ruins her life by her decision to marry Reuben Elgar is less an indictment of the education that she has received than it is an indication of the strength of social pressures. Even so free a spirit as Cecily is subject to their force and may succumb. In Born in Exile Gissing presents Marcella Moxey and Sylvia

Moorhouse, two women of sterner if less enticing stuff than Cecily Doran. They tend to be almost entirely dispassionate in their respective approaches to life, and seem able to function without much concern for the usually sanctioned relationships to men.

But it is in The Odd Women, and more particularly in the persons of Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot, that Gissing provides his most intensive study of the new woman. Nunn and Barfoot run a training school for young women in which they try to teach the skills by which a woman who does not choose to marry and who has no other means of support can earn a living which will ensure her financial independence and some dignity. However, Gissing's presentation of the whole matter leaves no doubt that the deliberate and cold-blooded decision to pursue a career as a single woman is likely to exact a very high price: a woman's essential femininity. In sharing this conviction with many others of his time Gissing found himself, as Walter E. Houghton points out, in quite prominent company.[4] The women who choose to compete in the business world Gissing shows as becoming de-sexed or even having to become masculine like the French sisters (In the Year of Jubilee) in order to compete successfully. As Christine Houde points out, the same point is made with respect to Nunn and Barfoot in The Odd Women.[5] While Gissing seems to evince considerable sympathy for the plight of the single woman who is forced by external circumstance to earn her own way, he seems to have feared and resented those whose militant stance on the preferability of the single life seemed to threaten the family as a basic social unit, the disintegration of which he saw as leading to social anarchy. His disapproval of such a possibility is shown in his depictions of radical feminists losing their sexual identity.

The Gissing ideal of womanhood, as is made quite obvious by Ida Starr (The Unclassed), Mrs. Morton (The Whirlpool), and Irene Derwent (The Crown of Life), is a woman who, while she develops her intellectual capability to the greatest possible extent, still marries, bears children, creates a tranquil home atmosphere secure from the ravages of the external world and in all the crucial issues of life always defers to her husband's superior judgment. From this it can be seen that Gissing's position with respect to women is essentially that of John Ruskin in his essay "Of Queens' Gardens."[6] Although, as Jacob Korg points out, Gissing may have had some sympathy with some aspects of the struggle of women for emancipation from legal constraints,[7] he nevertheless seems to have believed implicitly in the naturally inferior position of women. He was by no means prepared to accede to Mill's clarion call in The Subjection of Women for their total emancipation.

In order to convey directly his approval of the ideal woman, Gissing almost always identifies his admirable female characters with the forces of nature, or, as in this description of Ida Starr stepping from the water, with the beauty of a classical painting.

> She stepped from the water a few paces, and began hastily to put off her clothing; in a moment her feet were again in the ripples, and she was walking out from the beach, till her gleaming body was hidden. Then she bathed, breasting the full flow with delight, making the sundered and broken water flash myriad reflections of the moon and stars. As she came forth onto the beach again, it was another Venus Anadyomene. Heaven gloried in her beauty, and over-shone her with chaste splendour.[8]

Others identified in the same way with the forces of nature and art include Emily Hood (A Life's Morning), Adela Waltham (Demos), Thyrza Trent (Thyrza), Jane Snowdon (The Nether World), Cecily Doran (The Emancipated), Nancy Lord (In the Year of Jubilee), and Bertha Cross (Will Warburton). In the novels of the eighties these figures are usually identified physically by their pale, slight bodies and their innate superiority of spirit. In the later novels, Gissing managed to overcome his prejudice about robust bodies and superior spirits and presents figures which manifest both qualities. In these novels, in what represents almost a complete turn-about, the pale slight figures become spiritually enervating.

The ideal figures are almost always set in contra-distinction to such figures as the spiritually dessicated Maud Enderby (The Unclassed), the commercially oriented Ada French (In the Year of Jubilee), and the social butterflies Amy Reardon (New Grub Street) and Alma Rolfe (The Whirlpool). While such women are almost always seen as physically robust and attractive, they are shown to be intellectual pygmies.

Such clear cut, if simplistic, distinctions between women as types provide Gissing with one of the principal shaping devices in his novelistic fiction. Many a male figure in the novels, such as Osmond Waymark (The Unclassed) and Wilfrid Athel (A Life's Morning), is faced with the fateful decision to choose the kind of woman who will provide the happiness and fulfillment that he desires. Such a decision is crucial not only in terms of the marriage itself but also as an index to the kind of life that the chief figures will lead as a result.

Closely connected to the question of woman's place in society is the question of the education of the female sex and of education in society generally. On the specific issue of education for women Gissing was merely one of a number of novelists who dealt with what must surely have been one of the most debated issues of the day. The question is also dealt with in such diverse works as Tennyson's The Princess and in the essays of Ruskin and Mill. Gissing favoured the opportunity for intellectual equality for women, as is made clear in a letter he wrote to his friend, Eduard Bertz.

> My demand for female "equality" simply means that I am convinced there will be no social peace until women are intellectually trained very much as men are. More than half the misery of life is due to the ignorance and childishness of women. The average woman pretty closely resembles in all intellectual considerations, the average male idiot--I speak medically. That state of things is traceable to the lack of education, in all senses of the word. Among our English emancipated women there is a majority of admirable persons; they have lost

> no single good quality of their sex, and they have gained enormously on the intellectual (and even on the moral) side by the process of enlightenment, that is to say, brain-development. I am driven frantic by the crass imbecility of the typical woman. That type must disappear, or at all events become altogether subordinate. And I believe that the only way of effecting this is to go through a period of what many people will call sexual anarchy. Nothing good will perish; we can trust the forces of nature, which tend to conservation.[9]

Despite these sentiments--which seemingly place Gissing closer to the position of Mill than that of Ruskin--the farthest thing from Gissing's mind was that all women, or even all people, should be given the same kind of education. He viewed with misgiving and then with increasing alarm the results of the Education Act of 1870 and, as Jacob Korg points out, he eventually became convinced that mass education inevitably meant a reduction of intellectual achievement and of public taste and refinement to the lowest common denominator.[10] This, in turn, meant that society would thereby be less civilized than might otherwise be the case. For Gissing, whose ideas seem to be platonic in their origin, the whole point of formal education was to place the individual in a position where he or she might develop to the utmost degree of his or her capability. As Ruskin so aptly put it, "[My efforts] are directed not to making a carpenter an artist, but to making him happier as a carpenter."[11] The individual would thereby be placed in a position which would be conducive to his own personal happiness and that of the society of which he is a part. While Gissing was prepared to admit that there were those who are semi-literate or altogether ignorant in all classes, under the existing social structure the semi-literate and ignorant tended to be in the working classes. Gissing's educational scheme, then, and the idea is not original with him, inevitably meant that those in the lower classes would be trained for a trade while those of the upper classes would enjoy the benefits of a more refined learning. The conversations between Harvey Rolfe and Mary Abbott (_The Whirlpool_) concerning the future of the Wager children underline the fatuity of trying to provide an education for those whose bent, because of social or intellectual limitations, lies in quite a different direction.[12]

On the other hand, Gissing was also aware of the dangers inherent in arid pedagogical pursuits which are totally divorced from the actuality of everyday living. In this respect he was in agreement with such otherwise diverse thinkers as Dickens and William Cobbett, as Raymond Williams notes.[13] Jessica Morgan's breakdown (_In the Year of Jubilee_) is partly aimed at showing the results of a fanatic devotion to study to the exclusion of all else. And Wilfrid Athel (_A Life's Morning_) speaks of the danger of his becoming a scholastic monster with only one side.[14] Gissing believed that there was a particular danger for women in too great a devotion to academic pursuits. Not only are they likely to manifest the usual effects of a dessicating pedagogy, they are also likely to suffer yet another reduction of their femininity. Janet Moxey (Born in Exile) is able to strike a judicious balance between the impulse for intellectual development--she becomes a medical doctor--and the preservation of her femininity. But she is the only woman in the novel who is able to effect this balance. And, in any event, her career is seen as secondary to her role as wife to Christian Moxey. Marcella Moxey, her cousin, and Sylvia Moorhouse are equally interested in the development of their intellects and are equally devoted to the more general cause of the intellectual emancipation of women, but both pursue these goals at great cost to their essential femininity. The point seems to be that while women should be given the opportunity to develop to their fullest intellectual capability, they should not pursue formal academic training as an end in itself to the exclusion of all else. If they do, they are likely to lose their femininity. What is eminently desirable is that they should be allowed to develop intellectually while they remain in those positions which are commonly held to be appropriate for women. This is, of course, essentially the position taken by Ruskin in "Of Queens' Gardens."[15]

Another aspect of the problem of education is the unhappiness that is likely to result if an individual is educated to the point where he is no longer content to remain with his social peers because of what he perceives as their intellectual limitations, but is at the same time prevented from seeking his intellectual peers in another class by social limitations. Thyrza Trent (Thyrza) is educated and trained by Mrs. Ormond to the point where she can no longer be happy with Gilbert Grail, her fiancé (indeed, even her sister feels uncomfortable in her presence), and yet she cannot achieve happiness by striving to reach the higher social class of Walter Egremont either. The initial complication in Godwin Peak's life (Born in Exile) arises because Peak has been educated to the point where he must aspire to rise to another social class in order to mix with his intellectual peers. A consistent theme in Gissing's novels, as May Yates notes, is that for those with obvious social limitations "too much education" is little more than sadistic cruelty.[16]

In addition to the question of formal education as such, Gissing's novels are concerned with informal schemes of education. The attempts of Arthur Golding (Workers in the Dawn) and Julian Casti (The Unclassed) to instruct their working class wives in grammar and etiquette--aside from dramatizing the fatuity of trying to educate those who are intractable to the learning process--are informal exercises in pedagogy. Walter Egremont's free library scheme (Thyrza) is an attempt to mould the lives of the working men in Lambeth, and Michael Snowdon's scheme of education for his granddaughter (The Nether World) has as its base the notion that true philanthropy is an exercise in good works. Ross Mallard's scheme for Cecily Doran (The Emancipated) is designed to free her from traditional prejudices and inhibitions. Much of the discourse of Harvey Rolfe and Basil Morton (*The Whirlpool*) concerns Rolfe's fears for the kind of future his son will have and the kind of education that will be appropriate in preparing for that future.[17] Education in many of its facets is area of intense interest in Gissing's novels from first to last.

Closely connected to Gissing's interest in education is his concern with books. Whether or not his characters read and what kind of material they read is one of Gissing's methods of creating and evaluating them. Gissing's admirable characters are those who read and are interested in good books. Osmond Waymark's conviction about the therapeutic value of books (*The Unclassed*), the discussions between Edwin Reardon and Harold Biffen about classical Greek metres (*New Grub Street*), Harvey Rolfe's delight in classical literature (*The Whirlpool*), and Jerome Otway's interest in Dante (*The Crown of Life*) all testify to the degree of commitment that Gissing's admirable characters have toward the reading of good books, not only for enjoyment but also for what is seen as essentially a moral exercise. One of Gissing's favourite devices in creating character is to provide a description of the character's reading habits and, where it is applicable, a description of his library. Richard Mutimer (*Demos*) is typed immediately by his preference for the works of outdated philosophers and radical economists. Something of his fate is also indicated by the narrator's comment that the books are of "pathetic significance." The pragmatic Dalmaine

(Thyrza) reads only those books that deal with law and economics. The reader's initial sympathy for Godwin Peak (Born in Exile) is elicited because of his love of books and his appreciation of Martin Warricombe's excellent library. Harvey Rolfe's library (The Whirlpool) is a clear reflection of the various phases of a multi-faceted career.

On the other hand, those characters who read the wrong kinds of books, who have little interest in books, or who read no books at all are at least less admirable or outright villains at worst. Those who read only newspapers or other forms of periodical publications receive particularly scathing treatment at Gissing's hands. It is this kind of reading public which makes Whelpdale's Chit-Chat (New Grub Street) such an outstanding commercial success. Hugh Carnaby (The Whirlpool) has a few books in his "library," but very few of them have ever been read and they are not of the best kind in any event. The favourite reading of the physical culture oriented--and therefore unpleasant--Stratton family (Isabel Clarendon) not too surprisingly is Captain Marryat. Lee Hannaford, an ardent imperialist and maker of explosives (The Crown of Life), is addicted to books which deal with all aspects of imperialism and militarism. Female characters, such as Harriet Smales (The Unclassed), are seen to be particularly unsavoury because of their love for cheap penny weekly fiction.

> Harriet had saturated her mind--or whatever succedaneum for mind her constitution comprised--with the fiction of penny weeklies,

> and owed to this training all manner of awkward affections which she took to be the most becoming manifestations of a susceptible heart. Every now and then she would express herself in phrases of the most absurdly high-flown kind, and of late she had got into the habit of heaving profound sighs between her sentences.[18]

With this kind of rhetorical comment the narrator effectively controls the reader's response to the character from the outset. The virtues of those who read good books and who are affected by them and the shortcomings of the villainous or vacuous characters who either do not read books at all or who read the wrong kinds of books, and, above all, the material success of those pragmatists Whelpdale and Milvain (New Grub Street), who pander to a debased public taste, underline Gissing's conviction that, without a true appreciation of good books, culture and civilization are on the wane.

Books and reading habits are seen to be a major formative influence on the course of human life. Walter Egremont's plan to establish a free library for working men with Gilbert Grail as the librarian is predicated on the notion that true knowledge leads to virtue and freedom. Old Widdowson (The Odd Women) prescribes certain books for Monica's moral and intellectual edification so as to create a greater bond of sympathy between them. And, as already noted in the case of Harriet Smales, reading the wrong kind of material can have a deleterious influence.

A change in reading habits by a character at a crucial stage in the novel is often used by Gissing as an index to character development. Harvey Rolfe's eclectic collection of books (The Whirlpool) is virtually an emblematic redaction of the course of his life from early schooldays, through the various intellectual poses of young adulthood, to the solid, if unexciting, intellectual respectability of middle age. Monica Widdowson's rebellion at the reading suggestions of her husband provides forewarning of the disintegration of their marriage. And Piers Otway's abandonment of his bookishness after meeting Irene Derwent (The Crown of Life) suggests his gradual abandonment of a dream world for a confrontation with actuality.

So insistent is Gissing in his novels about the importance of good books and intelligent reading that Walter Allen has been moved to remark wittily, if somewhat inaccurately, ". . . . at times one would think that the sole end of life was that men and women should read."[19] Gissing, in any event, seems to have agreed with Arnold that the quality of life would inevitably be improved by exposure to "the best which has been thought and said in the world," and, for Gissing, this inevitably meant exposure to the classics of world literature. Paradoxically enough, at a time when literacy--at least in the modern sense of the ability to read and write the vernacular--was on the increase,[20] Gissing viewed with alarm the growing number of those whose exposure to the printed word meant only that more and more people were being made susceptible to the ideas of dangerous men.

Although, according to Stanley Kurman, he retained a lifelong interest in the political process,[21] Gissing's chief concern in his fiction in this regard is oriented toward politics as it would likely effect social change. It was really social change, especially the possibility of social amelioration, that interested Gissing. But since there are those who seek social change through political means, politicians and, to some extent, politics figure in Gissing's novels. That certain social if not political change was needed in late Victorian England there can be no doubt. The depiction of the harrowing conditions under which the socially and economically disadvantaged were obliged to live, conditions which in Gissing's view led inevitably to bestialization, provides much of the material of the early novels, especially _Workers in the Dawn_, _The Unclassed_, _Demos_, _Thyrza_ and _The Nether World_. It is this matter in these novels that many of Gissing's early readers objected to. Yet, according to Jacob Korg, none has ever been able to prove that Gissing's depiction of these conditions is not disconcertingly accurate.[22] These then were the conditions which needed changing on a broad social scale. In addition, the early novels are replete with schemes for improvement on an individual basis. The political figures who are depicted with considerable sympathy--Wilfrid Athel (_A Life's Morning_) and Denzil Quarrier (_Denzil Quarrier_)--are those who do their utmost to effect social change through a sense of enlightened social responsibility. There is no notion that any radical political upheaval will result in social amelioration. Athel and Quarrier are therefore not depicted as having any innate faith in their respective parties' platforms for social change. Indeed, these figures seem to be unaligned with any identifiable political party; they tend rather to make their appeal to a sense of enlightened social conscience which cuts across party lines.

The political figures who are depicted without much sympathy--James Dalmaine (Thyrza) and Dyce Lashmar (Our Friend The Charlatan)--are those who do tend to locate their principles in the platform of an identifiable political party if only because they believe that politics is the art of the possible and because they tend to be utilitarian about the conduct of life in any given sphere. Although Dalmaine is not an especially attractive figure--he is used as a foil to the idealistic Egremont--he is a veritable paragon of personal and political virtue when compared to Dyce Lashmar. Lashmar is little more than a caricature, an embodiment of Gissing's worst fears about the kind of person he thought was beginning to infest the fabric of his civilization at all levels. Admirable figures or not, Gissing's politicians, in Yates' view, tend to be seen less in terms of their overtly political careers than they are as persons with specific views about the nature of society and the role of the individual in it.[23]

The abuses which were so evident in Gissing's England needed correction, but, for Gissing, correction was not going to occur in the context of political or social chaos. The predictions of blood flowing in the streets by Mark

Challenger (Workers in the Dawn) and the fiery speeches of John Hewett (The Nether World) are shown clearly to be the ravings of men made desperate by social injustice and economic exploitation. In a Gissing novel, any political or social upheaval on a grand scale suggests the coming to power of the uneducated masses--democracy--and democracy for Gissing meant social levelling, not amelioration. As Gissing himself indicates, he wrote Demos to underline the fatuity of democracy.[24] The ascension to money and power by those unprepared either in temperament or education to handle such enormous responsibilities, personified in this novel chiefly by Richard Mutimer, is shown as inevitably leading to the destruction of the landscape, the elimination of traditional values, and great personal unhappiness for all classes. Gissing's essentially conservative attitude was almost totally in concert with that of W. H. Mallock, who says:

> When we consider the intellectual condition of a large section of the English working-classes; the spread amongst them of what is popularly called education; the consequent ferment in their minds of thoughts, hopes and ideas, that have been schooled into activity, but have not been schooled into order; the respect for scientific authority, without the ability to test it . . . when we consider all this, it is impossible not to see that any successful attempt to propagate in this country those explicit theories of revolution, which have already had such fatal effect upon the continent, might be fraught with effects hardly less fatal here, or might at all events bring us face to face with very serious social dangers.[25]

It was almost certainly this same attitude that led Mallock to publish his novel The Old Order Changes, in the same year in which Gissing published Demos and Henry James published The Princess Casamassima.

For Gissing, as for Edmund Burke, society was an organic entity composed of disparate parts. No alteration might be effected without affecting the entire entity. Since, as it seemed to Gissing, in the social scheme of things the upper classes were the natural leaders of society, it was from this group that any social change must emanate. Gissing's remedy for the obvious social injustices suffered by so many included a call to an enlightened sense of responsibility on the part of the privileged classes, acts of public philanthropy by those who were in a position to do some good, and a personal commitment on the part of those who might help in an even more intimate way. In his call for a sense of enlightened responsibility on the part of the upper classes, Gissing can be seen to be an inheritor of an idea that goes back through Carlyle to Burke.[26] Helen Norman (Workers in the Dawn), Walter Egremont (Thyrza), Miss Lant (The Nether World) are among those who are held up for the reader's admiration not only for their personal qualities, but for their philanthropic acts as well. Gissing's interest in social justice never flagged, even though the focus of the novels themselves tends to shift away from the world of the working poor after the publication of The Nether World.

Closely connected in Gissing's novels to the issue of social injustice are the evils of Victorian industrialism. Industrialism seems to have connoted for Gissing approximately what it connoted for the young Wordsworth, Carlyle,[27] and Ruskin. Whether in London, the newer cities of the midlands, or even in the smaller northern centres, such as that to which Godwin Peak (Born in Exile) retreats, the mise en scène of a Gissing industrial city is the same: fog, smoke, dirt, noise, and body-sapping labour are its defining characteristics. These physically debilitating effects find their reflection in the spiritual torpor of the people who must inhabit such cities. The extensive descriptive passages in The Unclassed, Demos, Thyrza, The Nether World (including those in the more idyllic A Life's Morning), among the early novels, and in Born in Exile, The Whirlpool and The Crown of Life among the later, make clear Gissing's continuing preoccupation with the subject. Even so short a work as Eve's Ransom which, because of its emphasis on the psychological processes of the characters, is limited in the number and extent of its descriptive passages has passages which, as May Yates notes,[28] make clear the contrast in the narrator's mind between the dehumanizing, suffocating atmosphere of the industrialized cities of Victorian England and the clear, invigorating one of the more humanely oriented cities of the classical past. In Gissing's novels, it is clear that even when the industrialism is carefully plotted, such as that of Mutimer's New Wanley--which seems to be a fictive version of Owen's New

Lanark--it is still a blight on the natural landscape, as the following passage indicates.

> Autumn had always been a peaceful and bountiful season at Wanley; then the fruit trees bent beneath their golden charge, and the air seemed rich with sweet odours. But the autumn of this year was unlike any that had visited the valley hitherto. Blight had fallen upon all produce; the crop of apples and plums was bare beyond all precedent. The west wind breathing up the hillsides brought only smoke from newly-built chimneys; the face of the fields was already losing its purity, and taking on a dun hue. Where a large orchard had flourished were two streets of small houses, glaring with new brick and slate. The works were extending by degrees, and a little apart rose the walls of a large building which would contain library, reading-rooms, and lecture-hall, for the use of the industrial community. New Wanley was in a fair way to claim for itself a place on the map.[29]

What is presented here is a fictional redaction of what Ruskin describes in The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century, the first lecture of which was delivered in London in 1884. It would be simplistic, though, to conclude from the foregoing that the forces of industrialism--denoting urbanization, noise, dirt, bestializing mechanical labour--were anathema to Gissing merely because of their blatant materialism. In material terms, the workers of New Wanley are initially better off than they have ever been. The forces of industrialism were anathema to Gissing, as they were in turn to Carlyle and Ruskin, because they represented labour in the mechanical sense divorced from the social, moral and spiritual forces of life. These essentially nonmaterial forces of life Gissing held to be important because they were indices of the degree of civilization which society as a whole had attained. The opportunity to enjoy solitude, tranquillity, the natural beauty of the countryside, and a reliance on the order of nature as a mirror for the right order of society were the things that Gissing held to be inviolable. Urban centres became for Gissing not only symbols of a degrading materialism to which too many seemed to be committed to the exclusion of all else, but also symbols of the social, political, and cultural anarchy into which he felt his civilization was, at first slowly, but then with ever increasing rapidity, sinking.

From the first published novel to the last, and in the increasingly discussed _The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft_, the virtues of rural England, connoting the values of culture and civilization, are contrasted to the vices of urban England, connoting the forces of cultural, political and social barbarism. This contrast is effected not only in the sometimes verbose descriptive passages; it is effected as well dramatically in terms of what the characters, especially in the early novels, personify. In _A Life's Morning_ Richard Dagworthy, the wealthy industrialist, is clearly identified as the embodiment of industrialism, particularly as manifested in more impersonal terms by the drab little Yorkshire town over which he exercises his plutocratic hegemony. Emily Hood, despite her physical similarity to the ascetic Maud Enderby (_The Unclassed_), is equally clearly the embodiment of those values which represent rural England and which Dagworthy, personifying industrialism, must possess. Dagworthy knows intuitively that he must have Emily, not only because, as M. C. Donnelly points out, she is a valuable possession much like a prize animal or piece of furniture,[30] but also because he, the personification of voracious industrialism, must ever continue to take possession of those rural values of England which Emily represents for his continued and continuing existence. As Gissing saw it, industrialism must ever continue to expand or it will begin to wither away. The basic conflict between industrial, urban England and rural, natural England is evident in novel after novel and serves as a basic shaping mechanism for the fiction. The dilemma is given flesh and blood by being rendered as the personal choice one of Gissing's young men must make between two types of young woman.

In addition to the fact that industrialism represented the destruction of the values of the rural England that he loved, Gissing also, as May Yates points out, saw a direct connection between industrialism, economic competition, imperialism and war.[31] The struggle by industrialists for economic domination at the international level Gissing saw as merely an extrapolation of the struggle by British industrialists to dominate the life and culture of Britain. At the international level the struggle for hegemony would lead inevitably to war. A number of the discussions in _The Whirlpool_, especially those between Rolfe and Carnaby and those between Rolfe and Morton, are centred on the problem of finding suitable outlets for the national vitality, whether in terms of human or capital resources. The Crown of Life is similarly concerned with the questions of economic imperialism and international militarism in all their various aspects. The issue is rendered less abstract by the obvious contrast that is developed between the militaristic and disagreeable Lee Hannaford and the admirable but all too feeble Korolevitch, who turns to the Doukabors because of his sympathy for their anti-state and pacifist beliefs. A more idyllic rendering of the same issue is given in the growing love between Piers Otway, who, after a period in Russia as an agent for an importing firm, seems to represent in a palatable form the forces of commerce and economic imperialism, and Irene Derwent, who personifies all the peace and music of her name and of the vitalizing forces of nature with which she is specifically identified. Their union seems to signify on one level a material progress which nevertheless preserves traditional values. In this admittedly idealistic novel, it may well be that Gissing betrays the same ambivalence of attitude that Walter E. Houghton ascribes to Carlyle and many another Victorian: a tendency on the one hand to decry the excesses of the "Captains of Industry" at home, but a sympathy if not outright admiration for capitalism, "especially when it involved national power and prestige."[32]

Although, as Walter E. Houghton points out, chauvinistic sentiment was on the increase in Britain as early as the middle of the nineteenth century,[33] jingoistic fervour did not reach its zenith until the late eighties and nineties.[34] Victorian society as a whole seemed to be divided into two main camps on the issue of British imperialism. On the one hand there were those who were wedded to the idea of an imperial Britain, strong in industrial might at home and abroad, and purveyor of manners and morals to the rest of the world. Such supporters of the idea ranged in importance from the political leaders of the country who, as David Thomson suggests, debated seriously the issue of the necessary expenditure to pursue British imperial ventures,[35] to the zealots who drew their inspiration from the London music halls, which rang to the strains of

> We don't want to fight, but by jingo if we do,
> We've got the men, we've got the guns,
> We've got the money, too.

A number of well known figures provided literary grist for the imperial mill. The writings of Henley, Henty, some of the poetry of Tennyson (the speaker of Locksley Hall comes readily to mind), and a good proportion of the writings of Rudyard Kipling are among those which might be cited. The otherwise deservedly obscure Alfred Austin, poet laureate after Tennyson, shows how cleverly he caught and reflected the spirit of the day by poetizing in The Times his approval of the famous Jameson raid.

There are girls in the gold-reef city,
There are mothers and children too!
And they cry, Hurry up! for pity!
So what could a brave man do? . . .

So we forded and galloped forward,
As hard as our beasts could pelt,
First eastward, then trending northward,
Right over the rolling veldt . . . .[36]

Interestingly enough, a large proportion of such writings, glorifying the ideals of a spreading British industrial progress in the wake of military conquest, is addressed to a juvenile audience. In the writings of such as Henty, Henley, and Kipling the foundation stone on which the security of the British empire rested is the manliness--that is to say, for the most part, the physical prowess--of boys and young men. The notion seems to have been simple enough: extolling the virtues of courage and physical prowess in young boys inculcated the kind of manliness that would later be required to wage economic warfare for the benefits of British industrialism and on the battlefields of war itself, if it came to that. The games engaged in on the playing fields of Eton, Harrow and the other great Public Schools of the day were merely precursors of the great battles in life to come. Encouraged by the writings of such as Henty and Kipling--although it may not be entirely fair to see the author of "Recessional" in this light alone--and the rousing lyrics of the music hall stage, lower class boys tried to emulate in their own way the example set by their social superiors.

In the other camp, on the other hand, there were those who, for various reasons, opposed the imperial idea and all that it connoted.[37] In this camp, too, were those of a political stripe--often those of varying degrees of socialism--ranging downward in importance to those who had an intuitive fear of what the increasing industrial competition at the international level was likely to lead to. This camp too had its literary figures, such as George Bernard Shaw and George Gissing. For both these figures, war was the ultimate barbarism, the most complete expression of man's folly. Anything, therefore, that was likely to lead to war, Gissing eschewed. Like Henty, Kipling, and Rhodes, Gissing perceived the direct link between the emphasis on the manliness on the personal level and the readiness of an entire nation to go to war to defend whatever issue the national honour seemed to demand. Unlike Henty and Kipling, Gissing was horrified at the spectre of young men and boys being conditioned through their games to become cannon fodder at the pleasure of those whose values were not civilized. It is, therefore, not at all adventitious that although the connection between industrialism, imperial goals and war is dealt with most specifically in the novels of the later nineties, characters such as Hugh Carnaby and Lee Hannaford, addicted to the ideals of physical culture, manliness, and supremacy over others at the personal as well as at the international level, have as precursors the militaristic Strattons (Isabel Clarendon), all of the lower class young men at the games of chance at the Crystal Palace

(The Nether World), and Buckland Warricombe (Born in Exile). An examination of the novels concerned shows that while there is a considerable development in the presentation of the characters involved--Hugh Carnaby, for example, is a much more complex figure than any of the Strattons--the essential point remains: in Gissing's mind what may begin as little more than a devotion to physical endeavour for the sake of demonstrating superiority on a personal level will, with encouragement, metamorphose into a potentially dangerous militancy which, in turn, could only lead to war, the ultimate barbarism.

For Gissing a concomitant to industrialism is commercialism, a commercialism which imposes its influence not only in the huckstering that is seemingly so necessary for the successful conduct of business, but which extends its deadly tentacles into every aspect of the national life and which therefore tends to reduce all values, personal and public to a commercial base. Gissing's well-developed dislike for the increasingly commercial aspect of his age is but one of many echoes, as Holbrook Jackson points out,[38] of the thunderings against the trend of the times by Thomas Carlyle in such essays as Past and Present, in Sartor Resartus, and, as Raymond Williams notes,[39] even in such an early work as Signs of the Times (1829). While Gissing's tone is less moralistic than Carlyle's, he shared the older writer's revulsion at the reduction of every relationship to what Carlyle called the "cash-nexus," and his distrust of what further material progress was likely to mean. Although, as one student, Robert L. Selig, has pointed out in an unpublished dissertation,[40] Gissing seems to have been most intensely preoccupied with the question of the commercialism of his day in the novels published between 1891 and 1894, his concern over the issue is by no means confined to the novels of these years. Various aspects of commercialism, and more particularly of the spirit of commercialism, are to be found in virtually every published novel. It should be noted immediately that Gissing had no quarrel with anyone who endeavoured to make a living in trade. The principal male figure in Will Warburton, Gissing's last complete novel, for all his illusions and indeed delusions of grandeur, ends up by making his living as a greengrocer. There is no hint of satire whatever in Warburton's stoic acceptance of his lot. There is, of course, a good deal of Gissing's mordant and sometimes none-too-subtle satire at the expense of those in trade such as Andrew Peak (Born in Exile) and Mrs. Tubbs (The Nether World), who try to manufacture with glowing rhetoric a sophistication for themselves and their business establishments that is completely unwarranted in actuality. As other types of business people, Gissing's horde of voraciously cunning landlords and landladies do not get any more approval.

What aroused Gissing's especial ire, however, was the commercial spirit of the age. This spirit has it that everything--material or not--is a commodity to be packaged and sold to a public which seems to be all too content to wait and be told what it is that it wants to buy. The commercial spirit will, through clever advertising, create a demand for a given commodity and then let greed and the desire for pseudo-sophistication take over and do the rest. This debased form of materialism Gissing saw as a particularly virulent disease which was affecting the quality of life in his day. One manifestation of this commercialism is to be seen in the pandering to public taste of artists such as Gilbert Gresham (Workers in the Dawn), and the would-be artist Clifford Marsh (The Emancipated). Then there is the artist like Norbert Franks (Will Warburton), who not only has genuine talent but who also initially has scruples about what that talent is committed to. Eventually, like so many others, he is overcome by the desire for public adulation and pecuniary success and prostitutes his talent. Religion, too, is seen as merely a product to be packaged. The "salesmen" in this field range in character development from the caricatured Whiffles (Workers in the Dawn) to the eminently suave Bruno Chilvers (Born in Exile), who is well enough versed in the sophistical arguments that the public wants to hear that he can satisfactorily reconcile the apparently irreconcilable claims of science and religion. A similar packaging and selling procedure operates in the worlds of music (The Whirlpool), education (In the Year of Jubilee), literature (New Grub Street), and politics (Our Friend The Charlatan). No area of life seems safe from the ravages of this disease of modern life. The kind of sensibility which is particularly susceptible to the commercial thrust of the age Gissing identified--with others of like ilk--as the product of mass education and mass culture. Perhaps the most savage satire surrounds the figure of Luckworth Crewe (In the Year of Jubilee), who, with his cut-rate dress shop churning out cheap imitations of expensive and well-made originals, and an advertising campaign by means of billboards which desecrate the English countryside, is the very embodiment of the commercial spirit of the day.

The success of the hucksters like Gresham, Crewe, Dymes, Lashmar and Franks is an indictment of the level of culture achieved by the society on which they prey. The ultimate irony for Gissing is not only that such people as these are parasites but that society by its very attitude, makes such parasitism profitable and attractive.

One of the most recurrent topics in Gissing's fiction is money. Nearly every novel deals in some manner with money, or the lack of it, and the often catastrophic effect that this has on individual lives. So preoccupied are the various novels with money in all its aspects that one critic, H. V. Routh, has categorically if somewhat inaccurately suggested that in Gissing's novels, "money is the root of all good."[41] Money is, nevertheless, a central concern. The novels of the eighties are, for the most part, centred on the sufferings of those who lack even enough money for something more than an animalistic existence. As Jacob Korg notes, the deplorable conditions which are noted with an almost clinical accuracy in these novels are ample and horrifying testimony to the results when an entire segment of the population is deprived of the means whereby it can secure even a subsistence level of life.[42]

Aside from his obvious indignation about the exploitation of the poor by the well-to-do segments of society, Gissing depicts with considerable insight and force the plight of the bright young intellectual who has all the requisites for success in life except social position and money. Even the aristocratic Dymchurch (Our Friend The Charlatan), for all his social connections, feels keenly his lack of money. More often, the novels present the case of the young man without social connections and money, and all too often the lack of money is shown to be a blighting influence on an otherwise promising future. The cases of Bernard Kingcote (Isabel Clarendon), Sidney Kirkwood (The Nether World), Godwin Peak (Born in Exile), Edwin Reardon (New Grub Street), and Cecil Morphew (The Whirlpool), among others, provide examples of what can happen when aspiration and ability are unsupported by monetary resources.

But the worship of money to the exclusion of other considerations exacts its price. The cases of Gilbert Gresham (Workers in the Dawn), Michael Snowdon (The Nether World), Jasper Milvain (New Grub Street), and Luckworth Crewe (In the Year of Jubilee) dramatize the insensitivity and indeed inhumanity that is likely to result when money becomes an end in itself and not just the means to an end.

Furthermore, the novels make clear that merely having money at one's command is no guarantee of the intelligent use of it. Richard Mutimer (Demos) and Michael Snowdon (The Nether World) provide two examples of the difficulties that can arise when those who are unfit for the exercise of power and responsibility suddenly acquire money. Snowdon's granddaughter is deprived of her inheritance partly because of the machinations of others and partly because of Snowdon's inability to prepare for the various contingencies of the future. Mutimer's rise and fall are directly attributable to his inability to handle money and the responsibility that it brings. Indeed, in Demos the havoc that is wrought in both personal and social terms by the inability of the Mutimers of the time to handle money is counterpointed by the return to tranquillity that occurs in both spheres when the aristocratic Eldon has his inheritance returned to him. The manner in which the two men--and thereby the two classes that they personify--handle their money serves as a basic structuring device. Even in his usually more sympathetic treatment of the handling of money by the upper classes--those who by birth and training are more suited for the exercise of power and responsibility--Gissing shows that personal vanity can sometimes interfere with the exercise of true philanthropy. Mrs. Ormond (Thyrza) and Lady Ogram (Our Friend The Charlatan) know how to apply the power that money brings, but their altruistic motives are at least partially undercut by the fact that they enjoy manipulating the lives of others and so secure some sense of self-gratification.

The sudden acquisition of money by means of a bequest or will--a legacy from the eighteenth-century novel--plays a significant role in Gissing's works. Eccentric or unusual wills help to determine the action in Workers in the Dawn, Isabel Clarendon, Demos, Born in Exile, In the Year of Jubilee, The Whirlpool, and Our Friend The Charlatan. Occasionally, as in The Odd Women, it is the absence of a will of any description which plays a vital role in the action. In the early novels, Gissing's use of the will is a rather clumsy and obvious technique to change the course of the action in a significant way. In the later novels, the focus is less on the manner of acquiring or losing the money than it is on the effect that the acquiring or the losing of it has on the psychological development of the characters. In this shift of emphasis, some indication of Gissing's growing power as a novelist and of his changing conception of structure can be seen.

Curiously, only in the last published novel, Will Warburton, is the hero, suddenly deprived of the money he thought would be available to him to provide the kind of life that is consistent with his self-view, able to reconcile himself to his new situation and to face with equanimity the loss of social status and all that that connotes ordained by his largely impecunious future. On the whole, while Gissing shows that not all of the ills of society or of the individual can be remedied by money alone, nevertheless, as H. V. Routh suggests, intelligently applied money is the vehicle by which culture can be pursued and civilization preserved.[43] Gissing's novels leave little doubt as to which class of society may best achieve this end.

The place of the artist and his art in society plays an important part in Gissing's fiction, particularly in the early novels. In the later novels, the issue of whether or not art should serve society in some fashion shifts to a consideration of art as it bears directly on the artist's personality. Whether or not the artist must be loyal only to his art and to his own notions of artistic integrity, or whether that art and artist should somehow serve society directly is the typically Victorian dilemma--early explored by Tennyson in The Palace of Art and later by both Ruskin and Morris--which confronts Gissing's artist figures. The admirable figures, such as Arthur Golding (Workers in the Dawn), Osmond Waymark and Julian Casti (The Unclassed), Ross Mallard (The Emancipated), and Edwin Reardon and Harold Biffen (New Grub Street), are those who agonize over the issue. The less admirable, such as Gilbert Gresham (Workers in the Dawn), Felix Dymes (The Whirlpool), and Norbert Franks (Will Warburton), seem to have settled the question very quickly in their own minds in favour of pecuniary success: give the public what it will pay for.

Whether or not his characters are artists, Gissing shared with Ruskin and Morris a belief in the power of art to affect people. Like his more famous contemporaries, Gissing strongly believed in the ameliorating effect of art. The ability to recognize and to be susceptible to the influence of good art he uses as a characterizing device. The contrast between the paintings in the Peckover flat and those in Sidney Kirkwood's (The Nether World) makes clear the distinction between people as well as paintings. The emancipation of Miriam Baske (The Emancipated) from her puritanical English background is effected largely by the artistic environment of Italy in concert with the personality of the artist, Ross Mallard. While he may have had little sympathy with some of the excesses of the art for art's sake movement, Gissing believed in the nobility of the attempt by the true artist to embue his civilization with culture, and he held sacrosanct the notion that the artist, although a vital and necessary member of society, must in some fashion remain impervious to those influences from society which might be deleterious to his art.

In addition to the recurrent themes and materials, Gissing's novels reveal a recurrence of certain character types, especially among the secondary and tertiary characters. The recurrence of these character types underlines the idea that at least in subject matter Gissing's novels changed relatively little throughout his career. In addition to the two basic types of young woman over which Gissing's young men tend to agonize, the novels have the recurrent figure of the middle-aged matron, often a widow, who plays a significant role in the lives of the people with whom she is often only casually acquainted. In one instance--Mrs. Rossall (A Life's Morning)--the woman is a close relative, but more often she can best be described as a friend with social connections. All of these women tend to have about them an aura of mystery in that they sometimes seem to lack motivation for their more than casual interest in the affairs of others. Possibly even more tantalizing is the fact that there are strong hints of sexual attraction between these women and the chief male figure, who is most often somewhat younger. All of the women in question have access to enough money and social prestige that they can and do perform the role of Deus Ex Machina in the working out of an often fairly complex narrative pattern. There is as well in some cases--those of Mrs. Wade (Denzil Quarrier), and Mrs. Strangeways (The Whirlpool) come most readily to mind--a suggestion of malevolent intent, although since this is not adequately accounted for it remains merely as part of the mystery which seems to surround all of these figures. A listing of those who fulfil the role--Mrs. Rossall (A Life's Morning), Mrs. Ormond (Thyrza), Mrs. Wade (Denzil Quarrier), Mrs. Strangeways (The Whirlpool), and Mrs. Toplady (Our Friend The Charlatan)--and of those who have many of the same attributes but whose motivations are more adequately accounted for, such as Mrs. Lessingham (The Emancipated), Mrs. Damerel (In the Year of Jubilee), and even Mrs. Tresilian in the short Sleeping Fires--testifies to the strength with which the figure of the middle-aged matron, financially and often morally emancipated from ordinary considerations, mixing in the lives of others and harbouring a secret but unrequited love for a younger man, had seized Gissing's imagination.

Perhaps the most significant of the recurring types in Gissing's novels is that of the young man whom, as May Yates points out, "[Gissing] endows . . . with more than average brains, and less than average income."[44] Again, the number of characters of this description which appear in the novels and Gissing's own correspondence testify to the strength with which this figure had seized his imagination. Such figures include Osmond Waymark (The Unclassed), Bernard Kingcote (Isabel Clarendon), Lionel Tarrant (In the Year of Jubilee), Godwin Peak (Born in Exile), Edwin Reardon (New Grub Street), and Will Warburton (Will Warburton). The correspondence reveals not only Gissing's continuing fascination with this type, but also his conviction that his role in introducing this character type into modern fiction had not been adequately recognized. In a letter to his friend, Morley Roberts, Gissing wrote:

> But what I desire to insist upon is this: that the most important part of my work is that which deals with a class of young men distinctive of our time--well educated, fairly bred, but without money. It is this fact (as I gather from reviews and conversation) of the poverty of my people which tells against their recognition as civilized beings. 'Oh,' said someone to Bullen, 'do ask Mr. Gissing to make his people a little

> better off!' There you have it.
> "Now think of some of the young men Reardon, Biffen, Milvain, Peak, Earwaker, Elgar, Mallard. Do you mean to say that books containing such a number of men deal, first and foremost, with the commonplace and the sordid? Why these fellows are the very reverse of commonplace: most of them are martyred by the fact of possessing uncommon endowments. Is it not so? This side of my work, to me the most important, I have not yet seen recognised.[45]

There can be little doubt that Gissing himself thought of these figures as a basic type, so that even with their individualizing traits--and Gissing made them to be individualistic--they are in many essentials alike and so from one perspective constitute a recurrent type in the novels.

There are other recurrent types in the novels as well, from the militaristic types like the Strattons (Isabel Clarendon) and Lee Hannaford (The Crown of Life), to the artists such as Gresham, Mallard and Franks and, in a variation of his well-bred young man figure, the artisan figures of uncommon sensibility, such as Richard Mutimer (Demos), Gilbert Grail (Thyrza), and Sidney Kirkwood (The Nether World). In effect, as with the chief concerns of his age, Gissing's novels are replete with recurring character types. It is the way in which these character types are handled and the functions that they perform that is significant for the structural aspects of the novels.

From the foregoing discussion it can be seen that in many respects Gissing was a typical Victorian in many aspects of his thinking. Although deeply disturbed by the tendencies of his age, he distrusted the miracle panaceas offered by those whom he considered to be merely lusting for a power they would not otherwise enjoy. For Gissing, whatever solutions to society's obvious ills were offered had to be applied from within the existing social order. In this way, he believed that the essential integrity of the social structure would be preserved and the civilizing values to which he attached so much importance would be maintained.

Gissing's essentially conservative viewpoint can be discerned in the attitude he assumes on most of the important issues of his day. Like Mill, a supporter and advocate of the idea that women ought to have more legal rights and a better opportunity for intellectual development, Gissing is nevertheless closer in spirit to Ruskin in that both saw a definable (and defined) place for women in the existing social fabric. By and large that place can be described as helpmate, mother, and defender of the sanctity of the Victorian home. Like such social reformers as Charles Booth and Octavia Hill, Gissing was appalled by the conditions in which the working poor and the destitute were obliged to eke out their nasty, brutish, and short lives. In many respects, Gissing was more qualified than most to speak on the topic since he himself was obliged for a time to share such conditions of life. But, like W. H. Mallock, Arnold, and, to some extent Henry James, Gissing was fearful of the social, political, and cultural consequences which would occur in the event that--as the socialists were advocating--the working classes assumed political power. Like Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris, he deplored the mechanization of labour, the artificial separation of what in modern terms has come to be called management and labour, and, above all, the increasingly commercial aspect of life in his time. However, unlike Carlyle, Ruskin and Morris Gissing had no clear idea about what might be done to arrest the tendencies of the age or in any practical way to re-vivify what he thought were the values of a by-gone era.

As a political and social thinker Gissing was at home in the tradition established by such forerunners as Burke, Coleridge, and Carlyle and running forward to his own time through the writings of such as Arnold and Mallock. But in contrast to the moral thunderings of Carlyle, the application of theory to practice by Ruskin and the incisive exposition by Mallock of what the trend toward democracy would signify, Gissing's vision seems vapid: the product of wishful thinking that would solve all problems by merely turning the clock back. Gissing's ideal is a society, hierarchically ordered, in which the aristocracy, fully conscious of its social and political responsibilities as well as of its prerogatives, rules by a benevolent paternalism. The lower classes, recognizing the innate superiority of the aristocracy, are content to pursue their labours in an atmosphere of harmony and a belief that all is being managed for their greater material and spiritual welfare by their betters. Harvey Rolfe's retreat to the traditional values of Greystone (The Whirlpool) is perhaps Gissing's rueful recognition that his ideas are hopelessly out of joint with his times.

But if Gissing's social and political vision is less acute than those of his more famous contemporaries whose conservative viewpoint he shares, it may be said in his defence that he was not primarily a social and political thinker. He was a novelist and his novels bear testimony to the exacerbating effect that the tendencies of the age had on those whose sensibilities were as sensitive as his own and whose dreams of a better life he shared. The significant fact for the purposes of the present study is that although Gissing's subject matter changed relatively little throughout the course of his writing career, his outlook with respect to that material did change and as it changed he found it necessary to discover new methods, new techniques in order to express himself. The attempts to discover the appropriate methods to accommodate his changing view resulted in the various phases of his career as a novelist, phases which are distinguished from one another by the various changes that were made in the structural aspects of his novels.

2. "their awareness of craft"

It used to be a commonplace in the criticism of the novel earlier in this century that Victorian novelists cared little about the novel as art. It was often alleged that the Victorian novelist was concerned only to tell a good story and observe the proprieties of the delicate sensibilities of the age. Typical of such views is that of Ford Madox Ford, who wrote:

> . . . what the Typical English Novelist had always aimed at--if he had aimed at any form at all--and what the Typical English Critic looked for--if he ever condescended to look at a novel--was a series of short stories with linked characters and possibly a culmination.[46]

The copious criticism of Henry James was hardly admitted as an exception and, when it was, it was felt that James' was a voice crying in a wilderness bereft of æsthetic standards. Yet, as Richard Stang and Kenneth Graham have shown, criticism of the novel based on æsthetic criteria is evident in the writings of Victorian novelists and critics alike after 1850.[47] As Graham comments:

> A concern for workmanship and form can be found everywhere from the short notice in the weekly to the mammoth review-article in the quarterly. There is always a risk of over-emphasizing through hindsight the 'modern' tendencies in such criticism; but even when viewed with caution, the Victorian critics of fiction were simply too voluble in their awareness of craft to be ignored or disparaged.[48]

Of especial interest in many of the discussions about æsthetic matters is the question of the design, shape, or, as it is often called, the construction of a novel. Design, shape, construction in this context seems to suggest the formal, physical arrangement of the elements of fiction. The frequently heard demand is for unity of effect, and unity of effect which should be achieved through unity of design. Increasingly, as the era wore on, the critics of the novel were wont to take the novelist to task for his inability to so shape the various elements in his novel as to achieve a totality of effect and meaning. As Graham points out, James' protest against what he perceived to be a critical fallacy in trying to view the various aspects of the novel as distinct and separable entities was, in fact, a familiar one to critics and readers alike even before 1884.[49] In Graham's words: "The cry for 'relevance,' 'design,' and 'interdependence' is a loud one," in the latter part of the age.[50]

Implicit throughout most of this criticism is the notion that the success of a given novel on æsthetic grounds is contingent upon the novelist's ability to redact the raw material of human experience into meaningful patterns. He must be able not merely to present that material with the appropriate sentiments for maximum emotional impact, but to shape it, to mould it so that such fictive elements as narrative line, character creation, use of setting, point of view and all the other aspects of novel writing cohere and become an effective vehicle for the presentation of that material. To the extent that the novelist is able to handle these various elements in the appropriate fashion, he will be successful in investing his novel with meaning and in achieving maximum effect.

What others may have been content to deal with only implicitly or in piecemeal fashion James deals with explicitly in his discussion of the novel in his essay "The Art of Fiction." For James there could be no artificial separation of the various elements of the novel. In what is undoubtedly one of the key passages in the essay James says:

> . . . this odd, literal opposition of description and dialogue, incident and description, has little meaning and light. People often talk of these things as if they had a kind of internecine distinctness, instead of melting into each other at every breath and being intimately associated parts of one general effort of expression. . . . A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous, like every other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found, I think, that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts.[51]

For James there could be no separation of form and substance, or vision and material, for form is substance and substance is form. From this it follows that successful novel creation consists in so rendering the various fictive elements of which a novel is composed that the idea or artistic vision (form), which is the animus, is inseparable from the parts that give it substantiality. In this context, the structure of a novel consists not only of such elements of the process of novel writing as narrative line, character creation and the like, but, in addition, the animating idea or vision of which these elements are but the tangible expression. Structure in this larger sense, then, as J. K. Johnstone points out, subsumes the notion conveyed by design and shape and is not synonymous with them.[52] It is in the rendering of the artistic vision that the novelist measures his success or failure in convincing the reader not only of the veracity of what he sees but also of the veracity of his seeing.

As already suggested, Gissing shared the concern of many of his contemporaries about the novel as art, and more specifically he was concerned as a practicing novelist about the aspects of structure of his own novels. In letters to his various correspondents, and in his essays and other critical writings Gissing reveals himself to have been very close to the critical position taken by James. As early as 1879 Gissing wrote to his brother, Algernon, concerning _Workers in the Dawn_: "I think I have worked things in pretty well . . . ."[53] To his sister, Ellen, Gissing wrote concerning _Demos_: "I have good hopes of finishing Demos by the end of March. I hoped to have done long before, but progress has been slow. However the way is clear before me now."[54] Later, he wrote to the same sister: "I am toiling at the commencement of another story, but as yet only in my head. I sit for some hours daily in meditation, and little by little the thing grows."[55] If the notion here is not precisely what James had in mind by the "found form"[56] it is something very close. Commenting on some of the aspects of structure of a recently published novel by his friend, Bertz, Gissing wrote:

> The construction could not be bettered. You have so admirably subordinated persons and details to the homogenous scheme. One closes the book with a sense of satisfaction, of repose after unutterable struggle--the true epic struggle between man and fate. Your characters are, every one of them, individuals, very plain to see; and their variety is great. They range from Sir Austin to the half-savage Eingeborene--from Klotilde to Miss Dudgeon. Joseph Karnisen you have presented admirably, so as to balance the extravagant idealist; and his brother is too amusing to be altogether loathsome. Karl himself is a rich study, and most important point, he remains the leading character throughout; he is never lost sight of amid the . . . manifold interests of the story.[57]

Gissing's essay "The Place of Realism in Fiction" contains the distillation of his thoughts about the art of novel writing, and it is in this essay that he seems particularly close to the position assumed by James. For Gissing there is but one issue that assumes over-riding importance. As he puts it: "The only question is, has he [the novelist] wrought truly, in matter and form?"[58] With respect to the function of a critic of the novel, Gissing says: "Process belongs to the workshop; the critic of the completed work has only to decide as to its truth--that is to say, to judge the spirit in which it was conceived, and the technical merit of its execution."[59] The emphasis placed here on execution is very close to the importance attached to it by James. In "The Art of Fiction" James says: "Of course it is of execution that we are talking--that being the only point of a novel that is open to contention . . . . We must grant the artist his subject, his idea, his donnée: our criticism is applied only to what he makes of it."[60] It would seem then that Gissing shares James' notion about the importance of a writer's skill in executing his material in such a way that form and substance are one and indivisible. In Gissing's case, the search for the structure that would fully embody his artistic vision went on for almost two decades of novel writing.

There are three specific elements of fiction which help to determine structure in Gissing's novels which underwent considerable change in his search for the appropriate form. The number and complexity of the narrative threads, the number and complexity of the characters, and the point of view of the narrator are the three elements involved. The changes that were wrought in the handling of these elements were significant enough that it can be said that Gissing was writing quite different kinds of novels, structurally speaking, during different phases of his career. A brief examination of each of these elements in turn may help to make more clear what is involved in Gissing's changing attitude to the functions of each in his novels.

In his earliest novels, Gissing seems to be squarely in the tradition of novel writing as established by his great English predecessors Thackeray, Dickens and Eliot. The novels of this phase are panoramic in the largeness of their conception, their majestic sweep socially, spatially, and often chronologically as Gissing uses them to manifest his vision of society. A novel of this kind in the hands of the consummate artist can be compelling in its power and awe-inspiring in its grandeur. In the hands of the less accomplished writer too often there is simply a welter of material which may be a tribute to the inventive genius of the writer but which, unless it is not merely used but used up, can be confusing to the reader. Again and again in the novels of his early phase Gissing introduces characters from every social group, from every age bracket, and often from every point of the compass in an effort to emulate the comprehensiveness of the novels of those whose lead he tried to follow. All too often, however, in these early novels such plenitude of material is deleterious to the main thrust of the book. Without a carefully developed sense of what is important and what is not, of what needs to be emphasized and what subordinated, the writer gives the impression of merely multiplying examples.

In such early novels as _Workers in the Dawn_ and _The Unclassed_ Gissing provides a confusing number of narrative threads which are held together only in the most tenuous fashion, often by means of the most implausible coincidence or that ubiquitous _deus ex machina_ device, the missing or eccentric will. In *Workers in the Dawn*, for example, it seems clear that the major characters--at least in the sense that the reader is obviously invited by the rhetoric to identify with them--are Arthur Golding and Helen Norman and that they, with their liberalizing tendencies, are among the workers striving for a new day of social justice. But the inclusion of narrative threads dealing with the Rumballs, the Greshams, the Waghorns, the Whiffles, the Blatherwicks, the Vennings, Ned Quirk, Samuel Tollady, Mark Challenger, John Pether, Will Noble, Carrie Mitchell, and Lizzie Clinkscales, to name only the more prominent, serves to detract attention from those whose lives and struggles should be of primary concern. This diffusion of interest is especially obvious when the 'major' figures disappear for chapters at a time while the narrator focuses the attention of the reader on another group. Gissing struggled for ten years to master the complicated narrative of this kind of novel and only in *The Nether World*, the last novel of this phase of his career, did he manage to handle it well. Even here, however, there is a dangerously complicated skein of narrative threads which threatens the artistic integrity of the novel.

With his developing interest in the field of psychology, and an increasing interest in the work of his continental contemporaries, particularly the French and the Russians, Gissing began to move away from the conflict between the individual and society, manifested almost wholly as external incident, toward the effect of society on the sensitive individual manifested largely as internal conflict. Not only did this shift in orientation necessarily mean a more dramatic presentation in tracing the inner thought processes of a given individual, it also meant a much needed reduction in the number and complexity of the narrative threads which make up the various novels. In contrast to such first phase novels as Workers in the Dawn, novels of the second phase such as Born in Exile, Denzil Quarrier, and Eve's Ransom are refreshingly uncomplicated in narrative line because the focus is on the development of the characters. Concomitant with the simplified narrative pattern is a greatly needed sense of proportion, a sense of which are the major characters and which the minor. In Denzil Quarrier, for example, there is only a handful of characters and of them only Quarrier, Lillian Northway, and Eustace Glazzard are important. Others, such as Mrs. Wade, Northway, and Serena Mumbray, are not allowed to interfere with the main interest, the fates of the major figures.

In the final phase of his career, Gissing was able to combine the strengths of the novels of the first phase with the strengths of the novels of the second phase. In effect, Gissing joined the undeniable strength, breadth and power of his social vision with his newly acquired skill in rendering psychological process. The results in two instances--New Grub Street and The Whirlpool--clearly reveal the coming to fruition of a mature talent. These novels reflect the mature writer, one who has learned by practice as well as precept how to handle narrative pattern and to make it a means to novelistic excellence.

The number of narrative threads in a novel will of necessity determine the number of characters. As already suggested, the general movement in Gissing's novels from first to last is from a complicated to a less complicated pattern.. And there is a corresponding reduction in the number of characters. In novels such as Workers in the Dawn, Demos and The Nether World Gissing was concerned to populate whole fictional worlds. In novels such as The Odd Women and Denzil Quarrier he was content to focus more intensely on the lives of only a few. In Born in Exile the focus is most intense on one figure, Godwin Peak.

More interesting and certainly more important in a consideration of structural aspects than mere number are the functions that Gissing's characters play in the novels. One of his favourite devices is to pair his characters. That is, he will often provide not just one hero and one heroine but two heroes and two heroines. In the comparisons and contrasts offered by these characters and these lives, the main issue in the novel is hammered home. Pairings of sympathetic characters, such as Osmond Waymark and Julian Casti (The Unclassed) and Emily Hood and Beatrice Redwing (A Life's Morning) in the novels of the first phase, tend to re-iterate the theme of the defeat of the sensitive individual by a hostile social environment. In the pairings of the female characters Gissing has a device by which he indicates not only the choice of different kinds of young women available to his penurious young men, but also the kind of life which the young men will later lead as a consequence of that choice. Pairings that involve one sympathetic character and one unsympathetic character, such as Hubert Eldon and Richard Mutimer (Demos), seem designed to emphasize the hero's virtues and the villain's shortcomings. In a number of cases in the first phase novels, such as Demos, the characters also come from different social classes and so carry the additional burden of illustrating the virtues and vices of the classes whose values they embody. Clearly, the disposition of such characters morally, socially, and politically will have a determining effect on the structure of any given novel.

Equally important is the fact that Gissing's characters tend to become more complex as characters throughout the different phases of his career. In a qualified sense all of his characters may be said to be types, even, as already noted, his bright but indigent young men. The differences in age, class, and in some aspects of temperament are not so great that one fails to recognize Golding, Waymark, Eldon, Tarrant, Mallard, Peak and Reardon, among the best known, as essentially the same fictive figure. The physically robust militarist, the pale, emaciated, intellectual female, and the mysterious matron of means are other recurring character types in the novels. Some of these figures remain types throughout: there is no significant qualitative difference between Stratton (Isabel Clarendon) and Hannaford (The Crown of Life), nor is there anything other than social differences between Mrs. Wade (Denzil Quarrier) and Mrs. Strangeways (The Whirlpool). In almost every instance such characters are 'flat' as E. M. Forster defines the term,[61] and they remain flat in concept and execution, as even their names suggest.

However, Gissing's attitude to his major figures underwent considerable change as his career progressed. In the first phase novels the hero and the heroine are conceived of largely in idealistic terms. Their personalities are well defined at the outset and they remain static. They are purely and simply sensitive individuals who have to deal with a world which is at best indifferent and at worst hostile to their aspirations. Because of Gissing's world view, the reader of these early novels is compelled to watch in something akin to fascinated horror as hero and heroine essay in vain to alter, re-mould, or in some fashion to ameliorate their social environment. The nadir of such human aspiration is undoubtedly manifested by The Nether World, in which, one by one, the figures are reduced to at least a physical thraldom and at worst a bestiality by their environment from which there is no physical escape save death. Over and over the theme is driven home: in the conflict between the individual and the environment, the individual, no matter how virtuous and deserving, always loses. In any case, in the external conflict between the individual and the environment or between individuals, the characters do not develop; they merely react to the conflict.

As Gissing's interest in psychology became more intense, he became more interested in focusing on the internal conflicts within the individual as he sought to deal with the world around him. That is, he grew progressively interested in the effect that the environment had on the sensitive individual, and in rendering that effect on a developing--in contrast to an already developed--personality. There seems to be some attempt to show such a development of character in the first phase novel Demos. Richard Mutimer embodies Gissing's view of what may happen to even an idealistic individual when that individual is unprepared to handle the almost unrestricted power that is suddenly given to him. In the actual execution, however, the focus of the novel slips away from Mutimer's character to centre on the political conflicts between Eldon's class and Mutimer's. It is not until his depiction of the gradual decline into alcoholism of Virginia Madden (The Odd Women) that Gissing's powers of character creation are in full evidence. Such other fine depictions as Edwin Reardon's surrender to despair (New Grub Street) and Alma Rolfe's disintegration into drug addiction and suicide (The Whirlpool) bear dramatic testimony to Gissing's hard won but finely honed skills. As in the case of the number, distribution and function of his characters, obviously the internal development--or lack of it--of increasingly complex characters has a determining effect in the changing structures of the novels. The general movement from many characters in external conflict with their environment to fewer characters who are in conflict within themselves because of the impact of their environment on them is but another aspect of Gissing's continuing search for the appropriate structure for his novels.

One of the most interesting aspects of Gissing's endeavour to achieve artistic maturity in the matter of structure lies in the changing function of the narrator of the novels from Workers in the Dawn to Will Warburton. Briefly, the reader is confronted in the early novels by the presence of what Norman Friedman refers to as "Editorial Omniscience." In this role the narrator is constantly present throughout the novel, ready to interpose himself between the fictional world and the reader. In the novels published after The Nether World, the role of the narrator changes in quite a fundamental way. The changing function of the narrator tends to affect not merely the way in which the narrative is conveyed to the reader; it also affects the structure of the novel and is clearly, therefore, an important determinant of the structure of the work.

In characterizing the function of the narrator as editorial omniscience, Friedman writes:

> The tendency . . . in Editorial Omniscience is away from scene, for it is the author's voice which dominates the material, speaking frequently as "I" or "we."

> Here "omniscience" signifies literally a completely unlimited--and hence difficult to control--point of view. The story may be seen from any or all angles at will: from a godlike vantage point beyond time and place, from the center, the periphery, or front. There is nothing to keep the author from choosing any of them or from shifting to the other as often or rarely as he pleases.
>
> The reader accordingly has access to the complete range of possible kinds of information, the distinguishing feature of this category being the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of the author himself; he is free not only to inform us of the ideas and emotions within the minds of his characters but also of his own. The characteristic mark, then, of Editorial Omniscience is the presence of authorial intrusions and generalizations about life, manners, and morals, which may or may not be explicitly related to the story at hand.[62]

This describes fairly accurately the narrator and his function in Gissing's novels of the first phase. The narrator, obviously upper middle class but well versed from experience in the sights that he shows, is by turns witty, ironic, wry and urbane. But most often, as he conducts his middle class readers through the purlieus of the urban poor, he is savagely indignant at the evidence of human suffering that he finds, human suffering which might well be alleviated by those in a position to alter the existing nature of things. Throughout much of his discourse there is as well an undercurrent of fear as to what is likely to happen if the disadvantaged classes decide to seize political power for themselves. Aside from whatever entertainment value such a tour might have for the middle class reader, there is a twofold purpose to these tours: they are designed to rouse moral sympathy for the plight of those who are not in much of a position to help themselves, and to alert the privileged classes to the potential dangers inherent in allowing such human misery to continue unabated.

This method of narration proclaims the Tendenzroman that the novels of the first phase for the most part are. Each novel seems to have its central area of concern or its informing idea; and narrative line, characterization, and point of view illustrate the point. From this view, the narrator is not merely a witty and personable tour conductor: he is also pedagogue, using all the considerable resources at his command to make clear to the reader not only what he sees but what the narrator thinks the significance of that seeing is. He then evaluates the significance of what he allows the reader to see. For his part, the reader is never allowed to have any doubts about what he is shown or what its significance is. He is there to be informed and instructed.

Clearly, the narrator of the novels of the first phase plays the dominant role in determining the structure of the novel. This in itself is not necessarily a bad thing, nor is the fact that more tends to be told than is dramatically presented. It does mean, however, that in his effort to achieve plenitude of statement the narrator tends to multiply examples and so weaves a complex narrative. Furthermore, he is the means by which the characters are seen merely as object lessons rather than as vital, developing fictive beings. While this approach inherently suggests that the narrator is the means to a predetermined and desired end, in Gissing's handling it also means that the characters themselves are, and remain, largely static. These are the aesthetic problems which Gissing had to contend with throughout his writing career. The opening scene of Workers in the Dawn provides a good illustration of Gissing's narrator as editorial omniscience.

> WALK with me, reader, into Whitecross Street. It is Saturday night, the market-night of the poor; also the one evening in the week which the weary toilers of our great city can devote to ease and recreation in the sweet assurance of a morrow unenslaved. Let us see how they spend this "Truce of God"; our opportunities will be of the best in the district we are entering.
>
> As we suddenly turn northwards out of the dim and quiet regions of Barbican, we are at first confused by the glare of lights and the hubbub of cries. Pressing through an ever-moving crowd, we find ourselves in a long and narrow street, forming, from end to end, one busy market . . . . The fronts of the houses, as we glance up towards the deep blackness overhead, have a decayed, filthy, often an evil, look; and here and there, on either side, is a low, yawning archway, or a passage some four feet wide, leading presumably to human habitations. Let us press through the throng to the mouth of one of these and look in, as long as the reeking odour will permit us.[63]

This kind of tour and this kind of evaluation of what the reader is shown is a distinguishing feature of Gissing's early novels.

It was undoubtedly a combination of the comments of contemporary reviews, his own readings in the works of the continental novelists of the time, and a re-consideration of the achievements of his earlier novels that led Gissing to regard the novels of his first phase as old fashioned in their methodology. His comments to Bertz about Mrs. Ward's methodology in a recently published novel suggest his own self-awareness about progress in æsthetic matters.[64] In fact, Gissing seems to have been concerned about his Eliotian methodology as early as 1885. In a letter dating from that year, he comments on the desirability of a more dramatic presentation.

> Thackeray and Dickens wrote at enormous length, and with profusion of detail; their plan is to tell everything, and leave nothing to be divined. Far more artistic, I think, is the later method, of merely suggesting, of dealing with episodes, instead of writing biographies. The old novelist is omniscient; I think it is better to tell a story precisely as one does in real life, hinting, surmising, telling in detail what can be told and no more. In fact, it approximates to the dramatic mode of presentment.[65]

Whatever the precise reason may have been, the novels published after The Nether World have, in quantitative terms, a much reduced role for the narrator functioning as editorial omniscience.[66] Turning his attention more and more to the inner thought processes of his characters in their reactions to the world around them, Gissing discovered a different approach by which to present his material. The new approach essayed to be more dramatic by revealing the inner conflicts of the individual as well as those between the individual and his external environment. This new orientation toward inner conflict meant, as already suggested, a much needed reduction in the number of characters on whom the reader's attention is focused and a corresponding simplification and clarification of the narrative. However, in view of the obvious fallibilities of the characters' judgment, it also posed the problem of who or what would replace the narrator as editorial omniscience as the ostensible authority in evaluating the significance of the conflict. The problem arises because in these novels not only is the narrator less conspicuous in quantitative terms, he is also fatally absent on occasion when there must be an appeal to some reliable authority for the sake of basic meaning. At the conclusion of Born in Exile, for example, Godwin Peak, one of Gissing's young men, roams aimlessly about continental Europe, the beneficiary of a legacy he has received from the woman whose love he had spurned. The reader, watching as Peak engages in every activity that is a negation of all that he had previously professed to believe in, is led to believe that Peak has become a fool. Yet, throughout the novel, while Peak's perceptions and activities are sometimes shown to be foolish, Peak as a character is not. The rhetoric inclines the reader to sympathize with Peak and on occasion to identify with him, as indeed it seems necessary to do if the novel is to have any force at all. The narrator, who in the novels of the first phase is there to clear up any such ambiguity, is here nowhere in evidence. Instead, the novel concludes with the condescending words of Peak's old friend, Earwaker. While some novelists have been able to make a virtue out of deliberate ambiguity, such ambiguity in a Gissing novel is nearly always fatal to the artistic integrity of the work.

Perhaps recognizing intuitively that the concentrated focus that seems to be so necessary for the required intensity of the novel of psychological process was not of itself his true forte, Gissing returned in the novels of the third phase to the more conspicuous use of the reliable narrator. In these novels, however, the narrator functions in Friedman's terms as "Neutral Omniscience." This narrator seldom intrudes directly into the action. Instead, the narrated portions proceed as objectively as may be and, although the narrator is present, the reader is less conscious of his presence than is the case when the narrator functions as the editorial omniscience. The narrator in this new role remains objective in the depiction of the inner states of mind of the characters, in his summaries, and in describing the scene while, at the same time, a careful control is exercised. This distancing of the narrator's position allows Gissing to dramatize more fully the inner conflicts of his characters while, at the same time, the conflicts are kept in the perspective of the neutral observer. However, even if the narration is seemingly neutral and even if the characters do seem to be working out their own destinies through their inner conflicts, as Friedman puts it: ". . . the author is always ready to intervene himself between the reader and the story, and . . . even when he does set a scene, he will render it as he sees it rather than as his people see it."[67] In any event, Gissing found in this element of fiction a device which served well his changing conception of structure.

Thus, as Gissing's outlook on life and his fiction--which he saw as a redaction of that life--changed, he saw that this changed attitude called for structural alterations in the fiction itself so that it would better exemplify his developing artistic vision. There are three identifiable stages in Gissing's career as a novelist, each stage or phase corresponding to a change in his practice in the search for the structure which would best inform his novels with meaning. While he was never able to achieve the sheer æsthetic brilliance of a James, a Turgenev, a Flaubert, or even a Zola, Gissing's handling of his material in such novels as New Grub Street, and The Whirlpool provides proof that he was able to realize the full potential of the structure of his work. The results, at least in these two instances, demonstrate that although Gissing's artistry developed slowly, indeed almost painfully, it did reach a fulfillment which is not merely competent, but which is æsthetically satisfying. It is this aspect of Gissing's work, on which he himself came to place the highest priority, which has not yet been adequately recognized.

Chapter II

Phase The First

1. "Such loose baggy monsters"

In his comprehensive introductory survey of Gissing's work in The House of Cobwebs, Thomas Seccombe notes the dominance in mid-Victorian times of the kind of novel writing practised by Thackeray, Dickens and Eliot. According to Seccombe, these giants of the English novel and those lesser writers who tried to emulate their example thought that among the constituent elements of the novel were ". . . moral thesis, plot, underplot, set characters, descriptive machinery, landscape colouring, copious phraseology, Herculean proportions, and the rest of the cumbrous and grandiose paraphernalia of Chuzzlewit, Pendennis, and Middlemarch."[1] George Gissing was among the admirers of the great novelists who seem to have accepted these conventions and he, at least in his early novels, tried to follow their lead. While much has been made of the fact that Gissing was influenced in his attitudes and approach to fiction by such French writers as the Goncourt brothers, de Maupassant, and Zola, and by such Russian writers as Chekov, Turgenev, and Dostoievski, not enough has been made of the fact that at least in the conception of the early novels, the chief influences on Gissing would seem to have been Thackeray, Dickens, Eliot and, to a lesser extent, Meredith.[2]

Gissing was, however, less successful in trying to emulate the example of the greater novelists in some respects than were such other followers as Collins and Reade. As Seccombe sees it ". . . he [Gissing] put his slender frame into the ponderous collar of the author of the Mill on the Floss, and nearly collapsed in wind and limb in the heartbreaking attempt to adjust himself to such an heroic type of harness."[3] In a sense, this remark is somewhat misleading because Gissing's lack of success in handling the weight of the vehicle was due less to his inability to adjust to the 'Herculean proportions'--although many have seen Reardon's struggle (New Grub Street) to stretch his slender novel out to the standard three volume length as one which Gissing himself fought all too often--as it was his early inability to manage the elements of fiction in such a way as to emulate successfully the structural triumphs of Thackeray, Dickens and Eliot. Certainly such novels as Workers in the Dawn, The Unclassed, Demos, Thyrza, and The Nether World can not be said to suffer from any lack of material, as Seccombe's remark seems to suggest. If anything, a novel such as Workers in the Dawn suffers from too much material, as the reaction of a number of contemporary readers confirms.[4] All of these early novels, with the qualified exceptions of Isabel Clarendon and A Life's Morning, share a comprehensiveness of material which distinguishes them from the later novels. A plenitude of characters, a social range which moves from the slums of London to suburban manor houses and into the clubs and drawing rooms of the lower aristocracy, a geographical range that reaches into rural and northern England, to the continent, to America, and to Australia, and a chronological range that often covers several generations mark the early novels. Even Isabel Clarendon and A Life's Morning are only qualified exceptions since the differences that distinguish these novels from the others are those of degree rather than kind.

In addition to their panoramic aspect, these early novels are characterized by the fact that their principal focus, for the most part, is on the working class. In these novels of the proletariat, as Frank Swinnerton calls them in the title to one of his chapters in his study of Gissing's work,[5] Gissing seems to have used his fiction to expose his views on society, particularly on the role of the lower classes. His views run the gamut from the early idealism of Workers in the Dawn, where social amelioration is seen to be not merely a possibility but almost an inevitability, through a period of growing disillusionment and fear of what might happen to culture and civilization if and when the uneducated masses come to power, as shown in Demos, to the almost total despair of the possibility of any social redemption, as shown in The Nether World. Effectively, then, the novels of the first phase are the forum in which Gissing expounds his views about society. This, in turn, necessarily determines the way in which the various aspects of these novels are handled in order to provide this explication.

These novels are similar in a number of other ways as well. Each novel has at least one figure of the young man with little money but who is intelligent and who has little opportunity to realize his potential either for his own sake or that of society. The denial of such an opportunity usually provides the motivation for the conflict that develops. In Golding, Waymark, and Eldon, the reader recognizes what is quickly established as a stock figure. In Grail, Mutimer and Kirkwood Gissing provides a slight variation, that of the sensitive and intelligent artisan who, in other circumstances, would have been able to reach beyond the circumscribed limits in which he is placed. The pairing device--that of creating two or more of such young men for each novel--is designed to provide comparison and contrast for the sake of commentary on the nature of society. In the success of Eldon and the failure of Mutimer--the pair from Demos--the crucial point about the relationship between the individual and society and about the nature of society itself is shown as well as being commented upon by the narrator. Such a device is hardly original with Gissing, having been used by writers from time immemorial. Social commentary aside, its principal function has usually been to intensify the experience of the characters and the reader's response to that experience. In Gissing's early handling of the device, however, the result is not intensification but rather diffusion of the interest, especially in Isabel Clarendon in which, in the persons of Bernard Kingcote, Vincent Lacour and Clement Gabriel, he provides three such young men.

The same device is used with respect to the female figures, the pale, slight of figure women, who are replete with inner nobility, such as Helen Norman, Maud Enderby, Adela Waltham, and Annabel Newthorpe being contrasted to the vital, animalistic, materialistic women such as Carrie Mitchell, Harriet Smales, and Clem Peckover. In the figures of Jane Snowdon, Thyrza Trent, and Emma Vine, Gissing seems to be determined to show that the lower classes can produce women who will inspire men to nobler dreams as well as those who can (and usually do) reduce them to their bestial appetites. However, again, when there are several of these types of women in the one novel without a proper sense of proportion and foreshortening, the result is diffusion of interest rather than intensification.

Added to these basic figures, each of the novels has a repletion of other characters which range in emphasis from the caricatured Whiffles (Workers in the Dawn) to the quite poignant portrait of old Mrs. Mutimer (Demos). While such a plenitude of portraiture peoples a fictional world, Gissing's apparent inability to subordinate the minor characters and to emphasize the major means that the reader's interest is seldom centralized and this lack of centralization, as Arnold Bennett points out,[6] means the diffusion already noted.

One of the obvious distinguishing features of the early novels is their common conception of character. In almost every instance character is conceived of as a psychological given which, if it changes at all, changes as a result of the impact of external forces acting upon it. There is no real sense of development or change as a result of inner process. Furthermore, if change in character does occur, such change is presented rhetorically by the narrator rather than dramatically from within. In Richard Mutimer (Demos) Gissing seems to be trying to show the decline from the early idealism of social justice to the position of power-broker in the conflict between the classes. The decline is marked by the change in Mutimer's plans for New Wanley, the ideal working class community, and by his switch in marriage partners from the noble, but working class Emma Vine to the equally noble but aristocratic Adela Waltham. However, rather than being shown such changes taking place in a dramatic way, the reader is merely told by the narrator what has happened. Perhaps the very number of such characters in one of these early novels in addition to the use of the narrator in the guise of editorial omniscience precludes dramatic presentation of the characters' conflicts. In any event, Gissing seems content at this point to externalize the conflicts and to tell rather than show.

As an almost inevitable consequence of a well populated fictional world, each character whether major or minor being provided with considerable biographical detail, the early novels are burdened by a multeity of narrative threads which, instead of being woven into a tight pattern, all too often tend to exist in their own right and are held together only by the use of the most blatant coincidence. Even in Isabel Clarendon, one of two of the novels of the early phase with a relatively simple narrative, there is a confusing number of narrative threads.

Bernard Kingcote, a bachelor in his late twenties, loses his wallet while on a hike down an old country road and must therefore seek succour from a country vicar. He hears the story of Isabel Clarendon, later meets her and wins her heart. (A lower class girl, she married up the social scale and became a widow shortly after her marriage.) After a short and altogether unconvincing courtship, Bernard and Isabel decide to marry, but at this crucial moment Bernard's brother-in-law dies and Bernard's marriage has to be postponed since he has now become the sole support of his sister and his two nephews. Isabel moves to the city and pursues a frenetic social life, which, the reader is told, alienates Bernard since he is somewhat anti-social. Bernard's jealousy of Isabel's social success and Isabel's inability to appreciate Bernard's position drive the lovers apart until, finally, they decide to go their separate ways. Isabel marries her long-suffering cousin, Robert Asquith, while Bernard, having been rescued from outright penury by the beneficence of his friend, Clement Gabriel, goes to Norwich to pursue a living as a bookseller.

This all seems clear enough, if not entirely convincing, but interwoven with what seems to be the main thread are the threads containing details of the Vissian marriage, where the partners seem to have the compatibility of personality that Bernard and Isabel do not have; the marriage of Mary Jalland, Bernard's sister, which marriage was a mistake from the start; the relationship between Ada Warren, Isabel's ward, and the parasitic Vincent Lacour; the lives of Thomas Meres and his daughters, whose situation has improved because of the death of Mrs. Meres; and the life of Clement Gabriel, who does not allow lassitude to defeat him as it does Bernard. Added to these are the threads of the narrative dealing with the lives of others such as the Strattons and Lord Winterset. The whole mosaic is held together by the seemingly unabashed use of the most blatant coincidence. The entire action hinges on Bernard's having the choice of roads and on his having chosen the older. The other instances, such as his losing his wallet, the existence of the will with the eccentric codicil, the death of Bernard's brother-in-law at the crucial time and the deus ex machina aspect of Gabriel's gift to Bernard, simply add to the entire tissue of improbabilities. Furthermore, the lack of subordination of the narratives of the minor characters adds to the reader's difficulty in focusing his attention on the characters whose lives and struggles should command his interest.

Summaries of the other novels of this period from the same perspective would yield similar results. Lengthy lists of characters, each with his own considerable biographical detail, innumerable narrative threads held together by the most palpable use of coincidence and, as M. C. Donnelly points out, a recurrent use of unusual wills,[7] all presided over by the ubiquitous narrator characterize the novels of the first phase and emphasize their basic similarity of structure.

Throughout these novels the narrator as editorial omniscience is present, providing information about the characters' past lives, commenting on the interaction between characters, drawing conclusions, hinting at future developments, pointing out lessons, and generally philosophizing about life and its significance. Like the narrator of Tom Jones, he is the ostensible arbiter of morals and manners for the reader. His is truly the major element for unity in the novel since all characterizations, all set descriptive pieces, all narrative lines and all meaning lead back to him. The narrator of Isabel Clarendon speaks explicitly to the reader about his function.

> . . . he who is giving these chapters of her history may not pretend to do much more than exhibit facts and draw at times a justifiable inference. He is not a creator of human beings, with eyes to behold the very heart of the machine he has himself pieced together; merely one who takes trouble to trace certain lines of experience, and, by working here on

> grounds of knowledge, there by aid of analogy, here again in the way of bolder speculation, spins his tale with what skill he may till the threads are used up.[8]

As it turns out in the practice of Gissing's early novels, the narrator does a good deal more than merely draw "a justifiable inference." He is at times preacher, using the lives of the characters he creates as object lessons for the moral he wishes to teach about a certain course of action, or about the relationship between the individual and society with respect to the conduct of life.

The omnipresence of the narrator tends to provide a ready reference point for morals and manners and the interpretation of the meaning of life as the narrator sees it. But it also tends in Gissing's handling of it to preclude too close an identification with the characters simply as characters. While this is obviously advantageous to the narrator who wishes to do little more than discourse about life and use his fictive beings merely as exempla, it is just as obviously disadvantageous to the narrator who may wish to have his characters exist in their own right. This latter point is of particular significance in Isabel Clarendon since so much of the conflict is between differing personalities. But since the characters are never really allowed to come to life on their own, and since the narrator continually interposes himself between the conflicts and the reader, the only way in which the reader's sympathy can be elicited for any given character in any given circumstance is by special pleading on the part of the narrator. Time and again the reader is enjoined to consider the case of this character, to try to understand the thinking of another, or to place himself if possible in the position of still another. The continual interruptions not only slow the pace, they also make it impossible for the reader to experience in any meaningful way the psychological conflicts that he is assured are going on. The end result is that the reader finds it difficult to care about the characters whose fate matters and, furthermore, it seems that many of the characters are insufficiently motivated for some of the courses of action that they take and which he is led to understand are inevitable.

Such prominence for the narrator would seem to argue for a complete and careful control of the material at hand. Even if the characters are lifeless types about whom more is told than is shown, even if the narrative threads are merely used and not used up and therefore do more to confuse the reader than to inform him, the didactic lesson or lessons taught by the narrator should be quintessentially clear. Surprisingly, perhaps, such is not always the case. While there may not be quite the degree of incoherence found by one critic, Michael Irwin, in the novels,[9] there are some instances in a number of the first phase novels when, as Irwin puts it, ". . . the story the author tells is at odds with the interpretation that he himself puts on it."[10] A clear example of a novel the main thrust of which is subverted by the narrator is A Life's Morning.

Briefly, the main narrative thread of this novel, more easily discerned than is often the case in the novels of this period of Gissing's career, concerns the relationship between Wilfrid Athel, one of Gissing's young men, and two women: his cousin, Beatrice Redwing, and Emily Hood, governess to two of Wilfrid's younger cousins. As the novel opens Wilfrid has returned home to recuperate from the effects of what are seen to be spiritually and physically dessicating scholarly endeavours. At home he discovers the young, beautiful Beatrice, who is visiting for a short time, and Emily Hood, whom he meets for the first time. Quickly overwhelmed by Emily's spiritual beauty and innate nobility, Wilfrid wins her promise to marry him, despite the obvious disparity in their social positions. Later, on a visit to her home while the Athel family is on holiday in Switzerland, Emily excites the admiration of the local industrial magnate, Richard Dagworthy. He feels an inner compulsion, the reader is told, to add Emily to his collection of fine possessions and tries to use Emily's father--one of his employees--in a dastardly attempt to blackmail Emily into marrying him. Emily, with all the nobility of her character showing, refuses. When her father commits suicide because of an overly-developed sense of shame, and her mother dies of grief soon after, Emily decides she cannot now marry Wilfrid and resumes her life of self-abnegation as a governess. There follows a six year period during which Wilfrid is brought out of his anti-social shell by the rapidly maturing, vivacious, and beautiful Beatrice. Under her influence, Wilfrid becomes a Member of Parliament and dedicates himself to the cause of social justice. These years also trace the deepening bond between Wilfrid and Beatrice until, with the family's blessing, they decide to marry. Just as the marriage is about to take place, Wilfrid--in one of the many coincidences with which this novel too is replete--re-encounters Emily and whimsically they decide to marry after all. Beatrice magnanimously steps aside and helps to smooth the way to marital bliss for the erstwhile lovers.

The most interesting and the most fully developed characters in the novel are the two women, Emily Hood and Beatrice Redwing. In these two, Gissing presents not merely the choice of women which his typical young man--in this case Wilfrid Athel--must make in order to secure a happy marriage, but also the choice of a way of life which each woman tends to personify. Initially, although Emily is shown in association with nature and the natural processes (Wilfrid almost always meets her outdoors, which tends to satisfy the practical considerations of their clandestine relationship and the formal considerations of the novel), the emphasis throughout is on her emaciated figure, her coldness of lips and hands, her pale complexion, her formal, admirable but essentially lifeless beauty. All of this in combination with her self-abnegation in releasing Wilfrid from his engagement to her recalls the deadly self-righteousness of Maud Enderby (The Unclassed), which ended in sterile religiosity and the bizarre sense of conscience which led to Mr. Hood's suicide. While there is an almost shrill insistence by the hero that Emily's effect on men is to raise them out of their baser selves into a higher realm, it is equally clear to the discerning reader that Emily's is the lifeless formal beauty of a still-life portrait, and that, ultimately, her effect on Wilfrid is to remove him from the mainstream of life and from his commitment to the cause of social justice. In placing him in the stagnant waters of uxoriousness, Emily succeeds in reversing the trend which saw Wilfrid being slowly but surely emancipated from his morbid self-centredness.

Beatrice Redwing, on the other hand, is shown to be a young, vivacious, warm and beautiful woman. Like Thyrza Trent (Thyrza) she is consistently seen in images of light and music. Initially shown as a somewhat petulant and spoiled child, she is later shown to be a beautiful, accomplished and selfless woman who is prepared to sacrifice her own happiness to ensure the happiness of the man she loves. But in her sacrifice there is none of that morbid self-dramatization that tends to mark Emily's actions. The suggestion at the end of the novel that Beatrice will find happiness as a gay socialite is simply spurious.

It is clear from this that the careers of the two women are shown to be running in opposite directions: as

Beatrice moves from mere social butterfly to a deeply committed, moral, noble woman who can inspire others to noble deeds and causes, Emily moves from a self-sustaining, quite admirable young woman to a cold selfish egotist who, in subverting Wilfrid's commitment to the cause of social justice, parasitically attaches herself to the man who must be strong enough emotionally to sustain them both. The difficulties with respect to the narrator arise when he attempts to convince the reader that the conclusion is inevitable,[11] and that there is a reason for its inevitability. As is obvious from the preceding summary, the ending is far from inevitable. Indeed, in view of the character creation, the narrative patterns, and the imagery, the ending is a subversion of the main thrust of the novel. In addition, there is, as Jacob Korg notes, some external evidence to suggest that Gissing changed the ending of the novel to satisfy a publisher's predilections about the way a Victorian novel should end.[12] Not only does the ending subvert the main thrust of the novel, the attempts by the narrator to justify the sudden turn of events are spurious. That any change occurs at all is the result of an overworked coincidence. The appeals, then, to an undying love are irrelevant. Second, no amount of appeal to a platonic love which, although well banked in the ashes of experience, can burst into sudden flame when its object suddenly reappears can hide the fact that Wilfrid's progression from his morbid narcissism toward a genuine social concern has been suddenly and violently reversed. The possibility that the reader is dealing throughout the novel with an unreliable narrator--as he certainly is with respect to the ending--is not really tenable since the reader has no reason to doubt the narrator's reliability until virtually the concluding pages. There seems to be no other conclusion but that the artistic integrity of the novel has been violated: the tale told and the narrator's explanation are not only at variance, they are diametrically opposed.

The artistic "incoherence" of A Life's Morning is quite apparent, especially in the light of the external evidence which provides a more mercenary reason for the revised ending. But this novel does not provide the only example of such flawed material in the period of Gissing's apprenticeship as a novelist. One of Gissing's most sympathetic critics, Jacob Korg, finds that Demos, in many ways a powerful and profoundly disturbing novel, has its problems of artistic coherence as well.[13] These difficulties in the manipulation of the structural elements, particularly with respect to the narrative pattern and the function of the narrator, effectively undermine the impact of some of the early novels. The impact that many of them do have, they have in spite of and not because of their structural competence.

In the novels of the first phase, Gissing--however imperfectly--worked out his views about the relationship between the individual and society. The manner in which the fictive elements of his novels are handled evokes a sense of total environment in which the destinies of his characters are worked out. The characters of these novels try to establish their sense of the rightness of things in spite of the hostility of that environment but, ultimately, despite the quasi-romantic endings of Workers in the Dawn and The Unclassed and the forced twaddle of A Life's Morning, it is the sense of the unyielding environment which prevails. In any case, whatever the value of these novels as novels of ideas, artistically they are for the most part just the first flawed efforts of a sensitive nature to redact the experience of life as he saw it. The power of that vision would, in the later novels, be uncompromised by any inability on his part to handle properly the structural aspects of his fictions.

In the last novel of this early period, The Nether World, Gissing's vision is uncompromising and uncompromised. The evocation of environment is complete and Gissing's handling of the structure is more sure and confident. The result is a novel which is devastating in its effect because the informing idea is given appropriate expression. If it is true, as M. C. Donnelly suggests, that The Nether World puts a period to one phase of Gissing's thought and personal life,[14] it is also true that this novel, which brings to fulfillment Gissing's early conception about the structure of his novels, puts a period to the first phase of his development as a novelist.

2. *The Nether World*

Published in 1889, *The Nether World* is easily the best of the novels, based on structural considerations, which Gissing wrote in the decade of the eighties. In it many of the problems with the aspects of structure are minimized, and the informing idea is given appropriate expression. Regarded as a novel which owes something to the influence of the French naturalists,[15] and to George Eliot,[16] it not only constitutes the end of one phase in the development of Gissing's thought and artistry, as one student, Sherif Nur, suggests,[17] it also marks the end of Gissing's early conception about the appropriate structure for his novels. Never again in dealing with social questions did Gissing work on such a broad scale. Never again in writing about the individual in society did he manipulate his materials in the old way as he does here. Instead, finally abandoning his vision of social amelioration on a broad front, he turned increasingly to the individual in order to renew his faith in human enterprise. This turning to a different subject led to an altered outlook which, in turn, necessarily involved a new method by which he could express his vision.

Despite the view of Nur,[18] *The Nether World* is a *Tendenzroman* and its message is unmistakably clear: life as lived by the various gradations of London's poor is a hell from which there is no escape. Even if an individual seems to be constitutionally capable of rising above the squalid conditions in which he was born, itself an unusual thing in Gissing's fiction, the order of conditions dictates that such a rising is doomed to failure. Narrative pattern, characterization, narrative rhetoric and image pattern all make the point absolutely clear. As another student, Judith Walzer, has put it in a masterpiece of understatement: "The novel has deliberately charted the course of people and things going from bad to worse."[19] Mad Jack, the choric figure of Clerkenwell, in addressing his fellow-sufferers, puts it even more dramatically:

> "This life you are now leading is that of the damned; this place to which you are confined is Hell! There is no escape for you. From poor you shall become poorer; the older you grow the lower shall you sink in want and misery; at the end there is waiting for you, one and all a death in abandonment and despair. This is Hell--Hell--Hell!"[20]

The physical environment in which the people try to live, the events in the lives of these unfortunates, and the stratification of the social system guarantee the 'pre-determined' existence of misery and despair. There is no need whatever to appeal to any kind of transcendant malevolent being, such as the "President of the Immortals" of Hardy's Tess of the D'Urbervilles, to explain the exigencies of this life.

The significance of the social and physical conditions to which these people are condemned is clearly established as Clara Hewett gazes out in a moment of reverie over the rooftops of London.

> Presently she was standing at her window, the blind partly raised. On a clear day the view from this room was of wide extent, embracing a great part of the City; seen under a low blurred, dripping sky, through the ragged patches of smoke from chimneys innumerable, it had a gloomy impressiveness well in keeping with the mind of her who brooded over it. Directly in front, rising mist-detached from the lower masses of building, stood in black majesty the dome of St. Paul's; its vastness suffered no diminution from this high outlook, rather was exaggerated by the flying scraps of mirky vapour which softened its outline and at times gave it the appearance of floating on a vague troubled sea. Somewhat nearer, amid many spires and steeples, lay the surly bulk of Newgate, the lines of its construction shown planwise; its little windows multiplied for points of torment to the vision. Nearer again, the markets of Smithfield, Bartholomew's Hospital, the tract of modern deformity, cleft by a gulf of railway, which spreads between Clerkenwell Road and Charterhouse Street. Down in Farringdon Street the carts, waggons, vans, cabs, omnibuses, crossed and intermingled in a steaming splash-bath of mud; human beings reduced to their due paltriness, seemed to toil in exasperation along the strips of pavement, bound on errands which were a mockery, driven automaton-like by forces they neither understood nor could resist.
> (III, 72-3)

Clearly, this dreary and enervating scene is the objective manifestation of the hopeless and debilitating physical and social conditions of the people who are forced to try to eke out an existence in industrial England. The dome of St. Paul's represents the privileged position of those who are in material and spiritual control of the lives of others. The isolation of the privileged classes is almost complete and seems ordained by divine decree. Under the "vague troubled sea" live the rest of the people, controlled by those from above whom they perceive only dimly and whom they understand not at all, deluding themselves in their errands that they have some measure of self-determination when, in fact, they are merely pawns in the economic and political games played by those with all the secular and spiritual power. Seen from this point of view their lives are reduced to "paltriness."

It has been suggested by Jacob Korg that The Nether World is uniformly dreary in its social and physical setting.[21] But a closer examination of the novel reveals that even in the slums of London there are degrees of hopelessness and despair, as indicated by the quite distinct areas which comprise the district known as Clerkenwell. There is the area north of City Road where, "Squalor is . . . kept at arm's length; compared with regions close at hand, this and the contiguous streets have something of a suburban aspect" (I, 56). Less pleasant is the area around St. John's Square which, ". . . begins reputably and degenerates in its latter half" (I, 119). Even less impressive is the area known as Clerkenwell Close, which is redolent with decaying buildings, mouldering monuments and which is dominated by the sculpture of a man's face, "distraught with agony" (I, 4) on the gateway of the Middlesex House of Detention. The nadir of squalor, filth and human degradation is to be found in the area known as Shooter's Gardens, which is marked off from the rest of the district by a narrow archway and a series of steps by means of which one descends into utter hopelessness (I, 178).

Each of the areas concerned has its indigenous inhabitants and these inhabitants tend to embody the physical and social conditions of their area. In a very real sense they are little more than extensions of their environment. The material relativism which distinguishes one area from another is reflected in the social distinctions which are jealously guarded by those who are marginally better off than their less fortunate neighbours. The Byasses from north of City Road look with contempt on the Peckovers of Clerkenwell Close, and, with an even more sensitive sense of discrimination, the Hewetts of Clerkenwell Close are aghast that their son, Bob, has degraded himself and his family by marrying Pennyloaf Candy, a resident of Shooter's Gardens (I, 253). Much of the grim humour in the novel is achieved as a result of the moral and social pretensions of those who live in squalid conditions over those who live in even more squalid conditions.

In contrast to life as lived in Clerkenwell, the novel presents a rural ideal as shown by the flora, fauna and sunshine of the Surrey Hills (I, 24). The quality of life lived in this setting is indicated by the idyllic existence of those close to nature on the farms of Essex, where

> . . . from of old tilth and pasture-land are humbly observant of seasons and alternations, where the brown roads are familiar only with the tread of the labourer, with the light

> wheel of the farmer's gig, or the rumbling of the solid wain. By the roadside you pass occasionally a mantled pool, where perchance ducks or geese are enjoying themselves; and at times there is a pleasant glimpse of farm-yard, with stacks and barns and stables. All things as simple as could be, but beautiful on this summer afternoon, and priceless when one has come forth from the streets of Clerkenwell.
> (II, 110-11)

Those like Sidney Kirkwood are only too well aware of the benefits that would be derived from the rural setting by those like the despondent Clara (III, 279). These glimpses of rural life, brief as they may be, effectively refute the charge that the novel is uniformly dreary in its physical and social settings. But, more than this, they make even more obvious by their contrast the dehumanizing conditions of the existence of the urban poor.

It is in this latter context that environment in its several manifestations, physical, social, economic is shown to be such a powerfully determining factor in shaping the lives of the characters. While the characters are shown to have defects of personality, the defects are seen to be latent, to be either brought out or suppressed depending on the effect of the environment. In this novel, as in other novels of the first phase, character is static: the novelist renders character as complete and then places it in a given setting in order, as Sherif Nur notes, to trace the effect of that environment on that character.[22]

Within the social gradations and the varying degrees of misery in the world of the poor, the pattern of the life of the individual is, with only minor variations, the same. Born into more or less disadvantaged conditions, the individual is presented with an opportunity, however slight, to ameliorate his situation. But because of his latent character defects and, even more importantly, because of the deleterious influence of the environment which tends to exacerbate those character defects, the individual is condemned to remain a denizen of the nether world. This same pattern can be seen in the lives of those like the Byasses, who live a life of decent ignobility, in the lives of those like the Hewetts, who are even less well off, and especially in the lives of the poor unfortunates who are forced to subsist in Shooter's Gardens. In each case, the point is iterated and re-iterated that with society's current organization there is the life as lived by the privileged few and there is the hellish existence as endured by the disadvantaged many. The system, established and maintained by the few for their continued advantages, militates against any social and economic amelioration for the many. In this sense, the many lead lives which are 'pre-destined' in the direction of deprivation and despair. Any hope by any individual that he has it within his power to change the essential circumstances of his own life, or in any way to improve materially the lot of fellow-sufferers is shown to be merely cruel delusion.

The inhabitants of Shooter's Gardens are those with the least possibility of improving their lot. Even in the context of this pessimistic novel, the situation of these people is particularly pitiable. Living daily in the midst of squalor, filth, noise, insufficient nourishment, and continual conflict within families and among neighbours, theirs is a brutalizing condition. The Candy family, on whom the novel focuses its attention for the exposition of conditions in their part of the social spectrum of the poor, is taken to be typical. The family consists of Maria Candy, who, when the novel opens, is an alcoholic, trying to abstain from beer, her journeyman baker husband, who works long hours at his trade and who tries to accomplish by fearful beatings what his wife's pledge cards fail to do, their son, Stephen, who at eighteen is a potman, and Penelope, "Pennyloaf," their seventeen year old daughter, who is a drudge in a shirt factory.

The situation of the Candy family might well have improved, at least marginally, since three of the four are gainfully employed but the long hours of exhausting labour for pitifully inadequate wages are only sufficient to keep them suspended in a state of continual deprivation. To find some relief from this on a temporary basis, Maria Candy turns to the solace offered by alcohol, but the expenditure which is required to support her habit merely exacerbates the already precarious financial situation. Her husband vents his frustration by beating his wife almost to death and then by leaving home altogether. While there might seem to be at least the possibility of escape for the children, Stephen's escape is cut off when his father deserts the family and Stephen becomes the sole support of his alcoholic mother. Pennyloaf's marriage "up" the social scale to Bob Hewett quickly deteriorates into a situation not unlike that of her parents. In these cases, Stephen's loyalty to his mother and Pennyloaf's love for Bob are seen to be defects which, combined with the forces of their environment, defeat whatever chance for escape they might have had. At the novel's conclusion Stephen is resigned to a lifetime of bestializing labour to support his mother, and Pennyloaf, after Bob's death, is obliged to join forces with Mrs. Todd, a widow with several children, so that with their combined talents and income they can just manage to survive. The typicality of the Candy family's situation is made clear by the references to such other inhabitants of Shooter's Gardens as Ned Higgs and the Hopes (III, 203).

Life as endured by those in Shooter's Gardens is so physically and emotionally vitiating that its inhabitants are unwilling to change their known way of life for an unknown, even if offered the opportunity to do so. Generations of brutalization have so accustomed them to their lot that many have lost even the desire to improve it (I, 178-79). Sometimes, indeed, interference by an outside agency, however well-intentioned, is seen to be worse than the existing state of things. When, after suffering a particularly cruel and brutal beating at the hands of her husband Maria Candy swears out a complaint, she succeeds only in having him fined, thus depriving the family of what little ready cash they do have. It is shortly after this episode that the elder Candy leaves home altogether. At one stroke, the law, in its administration of justice, has deprived a family of some desperately needed money, the services of a principal wage earner, and effectively sentenced Stephen to a life from which the only hope of escape would be the early death of his mother.

The inhabitants of Clerkenwell Close and its immediate environs constitute a "middle class" in this nether world. The people of this area have more social and economic mobility than the inhabitants of either Islington--the area north of the City Road--or Shooter's Gardens. Those in Islington can only descend the social scale since the rigidity of the social scale above them precludes any further rise, while those in Shooter's Gardens can sink no further and can only rise, if they muster the desire and obtain the opportunity to do so. Those in Clerkenwell Close can either rise to the semi-respectability of Islington or sink to the bestiality of Shooter's Gardens. In the exposition of the conditions in this "middle class" the novel focuses its attention on the Snowdons, the Peckovers and the Hewetts.

In recounting his life's story to Sidney Kirkwood, old Michael Snowdon tells of his demeaning childhood in Clerkenwell, his early marriage with its too many children, his demands on his wife which led directly to her suicide, the deaths of the children closest to his heart, an opportunity for a new start in Australia, the death of his eldest son which makes Michael heir to a fortune, and finally Michael's dream of using that wealth for the benefit of the London poor (II, 121ff.). To make the most effective use of that wealth, Michael has decided to use his granddaughter, Jane, as the chief instrument in his plan. Sidney's professed love for Jane makes Michael happy since it means that Jane, who also loves Sidney, will be made personally happy while, at the same time, she brings to fruition Michael's plan to alleviate the sufferings of others. However, the machinations of Joseph, Michael's youngest son, who is also Jane's long missing father who has suddenly re-appeared on the scene, and Sidney's scruples about the propriety of marrying a woman about to inherit a great deal of money, convince Michael that he has tried to play God with Jane's life as he did earlier with that of his wife (III, 138-39), and in a fit of disappointment and remorse he destroys his will making Jane his heir. Before he gets a chance to make a new will he dies from the effects of a sudden stroke and the money goes to his ne'er-do-well son. Michael is buried in a pauper's grave which is visited annually only by Sidney and Jane. His dreams of aid for the poor have come to naught, defeated on the one hand by his inability to see people as human beings rather than as abstractions to carry out his desires and on the other hand by the machinations of those who wished to have the money only for themselves. In keeping with the main thrust of the novel it is entirely appropriate that Michael is buried in a pauper's grave within sight and sound of the area where he was born and which, in some of its human manifestations, ultimately defeated him and took him unto itself at last.

Michael's youngest son, Joseph, is little more than a blackguard. After he deserts Jane and her mother, he follows a career in America under an assumed name and, when this fails to win him the social and financial respectability he wants, he returns to London to locate his daughter so that she can support him in his declining years. With the voracious Mrs. Peckover and her lusty daughter, "Clementinner", he plots to make sure that Jane does not get Michael's money and to secure it for himself. The combination of Sidney's scruples, Michael's idealism, and the machinations of Joseph and his legal cohort, Scawthorne, is enough to achieve the desired result. Leaving Jane with little more than a subsistence allowance from the money that he knows was intended for her, and the Peckovers with nothing more than a laugh of derision, Joseph returns to America to engage once more in dubious financial speculations. After a financial collapse in which he loses his money, Joseph dies a pauper's ignominious death. It is clear from this that Joseph is luckier than most of the victims of the nether world. He has had more than one chance to escape from the grinding poverty and ignominy of his background. Yet not only is he constitutionally unable to rise above this, his background itself has made an indelible impression on the conduct of his life, as the narrator makes clear in an explicit comment (II, 104). In this instance, as in so many others, the human figure deludes himself into thinking that he dominates the circumstances of his life, but he is shown instead to be merely another victim of the environment.

Jane Snowdon is, initially, in thrall to the Peckovers. The only relief from this servitude is the occasional kind word or little service from Sidney Kirkwood and Clara Hewett. With the appearance of her grandfather on the scene, Jane's life changes for the better. Adequately clothed, fed and housed for the first time in her young life, Jane is prepared for her grandfather's visionary scheme. With Sidney Kirkwood's help and love, Jane eagerly anticipates the task before her, but when Sidney decides he cannot marry her, she feels incapable of carrying out the plan on her own. When Michael dies, after having destroyed the will but before having made any other provision for her, Jane is left with no claim on the estate. After she rejects Scawthorne's offer of marriage, she has only the life of a London factory drudge to look forward to. Rescued from a thraldom in the hands of the vicious Peckovers, Jane has a chance to be the chief instrument in a visionary scheme to aid the poor, but she is still a pawn to her grandfather's scheme and Kirkwood's principles. When both men depart from their roles in the grand scheme, Jane becomes merely a pawn in the hands of society itself. Never other than a passive individual, Jane's story is that of a woman who asks only to be loved by the man she loves. But, in the nether world, even this is denied. Jane is victimized not only by society but, ironically, even by those who claim to love her most.

At the outset of the novel, John Hewett is in the midst of his second marriage. The only results of his first marriage are the two children, Clara and Bob, and the guilt brought on by the painful memories of a woman too frail to withstand the rigours of a life of unending destitution. His second wife, Maggie Barnes, has been given a new start in life as the second Mrs. Hewett after her conviction for petty theft, but now the inevitable succession of children and the familiar pattern of approaching destitution, marked by a series of increasingly shabby addresses, is wearing her down. John Hewett has also had his chance to better himself materially, but an inability to run his own business, the economic stringencies of the times, and his own improvidence send him back to working for others. When he cannot find work, he occupies himself by railing against the injustices of a system he does not understand and by watching his wife die a little more each day. Except for the help of Sidney Kirkwood, first as friend and then as son-in-law, Hewett would long since have given up and committed suicide, as he himself admits (II, 172). As the novel concludes, Hewett is right where he started, living in none-too-quiet desperation, depending on the magnanimity of Sidney Kirkwood and knowing that Sidney, through him and his children, is condemned to the same kind of existence.

John's elder son, Bob, has a good chance to escape the conditions into which he was born, but, again, his own character defects and the environment combine to frustrate whatever opportunity he might have. Bob's early life is not promising, but he does learn a trade in metal work which might have led to better things. However, Bob turns to counterfeiting as an easier way to make some quick money and is eventually caught. In the meantime, Bob has already complicated his life by marrying the socially 'inferior' Pennyloaf Candy and their life together has quickly and predictably deteriorated into a series of squabbles and a growing number of children. Bob's end comes ingloriously enough as he lies wounded in the hovel in Shooter's Gardens which serves as home for Maria and Stephen Candy. Desiring only to have the admiration of his friends and financial success, Bob has found in his environment only denial, a denial so emphatic that he is dragged down to a level even lower than that at which he started life.

In her attempt to escape a life of poverty and ignominy, Clara Hewett uses the assistance of her admirer, Sidney Kirkwood, to persuade her parents that there is nothing amiss in Mrs. Tubbs' offer of a position as a barmaid in her establishment. Clara, not content with this small success and wishing to remove herself even further from her environment, including her family and Sidney Kirkwood, becomes Scawthorne's mistress in an attempt to win herself success as an actress. She seems to be well on the way to whatever respectability the second-rate theatre can bestow when her career is abruptly ended by the jealousy of a rival actress. Clara, now horribly disfigured by the acid thrown in her face and contrite, returns to her family, re-engages the affections of Sidney Kirkwood and resigns with ill grace to a life as the wife of a poverty-stricken labourer. With the birth of her daughter, Clara becomes even more a victim of her periodic fits of depression which are alleviated only by the constant attention of her long-suffering husband (III, 284).

Mrs. Peckover and her daughter, Clementine, along with the lawyer, Scawthorne, are representative of the predatory instincts of this "middle class." While attempting to emulate the manners and dress of their social superiors (III, 180-81), they nevertheless can only feel secure in their own sense of social superiority by preying on those less fortunate than themselves whom they regard as socially inferior, as Clem's treatment of Jane and her attempts to have Bob brutalize the unfortunate Pennyloaf even more than he is wont to do bear ample testimony (III, 31-2). The Peckover women, having once had a business establishment of their own, have had a better start in life than many of their neighbours, but constantly poor speculations, bickering which has led to numerous fines, and a succession of bad debts, such as that of Joseph Snowdon, have reduced them to the position of running a seamy roominghouse for indigents like the Hewetts. The appearance of Michael Snowdon and the re-appearance of Joseph Snowdon, initiates a carefully plotted if none-too-subtle scheme to secure the fortune that they know the Snowdons have at their disposal. The scheme in its initial phase is very simply to marry Clem to Joseph and then make sure that Joseph inherits Michael's money. Once these ends are secured, they can then plot to eliminate Joseph as no longer necessary or even desirable. However, Joseph is enough of a predator himself that he too has a plan and, while he gets the money, the Peckover women are eventually left with only each other. Left to their own devices once more, the two women settle back into their old way of life and, having no one else to prey upon, turn on each other. As the novel concludes, Mrs. Peckover has been poisoned and Clem is in custody for questioning. The immediate cause of this violence is the keen competition for the affections of a lover whom, they were surprised to discover, they had been sharing (III, 271).

Sidney Kirkwood too has a chance to escape from at least the worst excesses of the nether world but he too, because of character and environment, finds himself a victim of a world from which there is no real escape. The son of a tradesman, Sidney is early encouraged to draw, with the prospect of becoming a draughtsman or possibly even an artist. Eventually apprenticed to a jeweller uncle, Kirkwood rapidly developed those proclivities which might have got him into trouble, but the death of his father and the depth of his bereavement served to restore Sidney's perspective and to save him from "a young manhood of foolishness and worse" (I, 125). As a worker in jewellery Kirkwood earns a decent if not well paid living and he does what he can to alleviate the worst aspects of the life of the Hewett family. Kirkwood's admiration for Clara Hewett leads him to be the chief agent in her decision to leave home. Later, when Clara returns home with her disfigured face and her career in ruins, Sidney's loyalty obliges him to try to provide for her since he feels personally responsible for her leaving home in the first place. However, in marrying Clara out of pity--which recalls John Hewett's reason for marrying Maggie Barnes--Kirkwood ends up being financially responsible for the entire family (III, 257). In effect, like Stephen Candy, Sidney Kirkwood resigns himself to a life of wearying labour to eke out an existence for others who are characterized by their crass ingratitude. Had he married Jane, Sidney might well have realized his early dream of becoming an artist since Jane alone inspires in him the "pleasure as of old in nature and art" (II, 57). But this is not to be. His own scruples about Jane's money, and the environment, in the persons of Clara and the rest of her family for whom Sidney feels an obligation, defeat the possibility of his emancipation, "from the distorting effect of the evil amid which he perforce lived" (II, 57). He can only, like Jane, resign himself to his lot and try to be a humanizing force in his own family, as Jane tries to be in the lives of Pennyloaf and the Byasses.

Even in the materially better-off world of the Byasses there are the inevitable pressures of the nether world to which all are subject. In this part of the nether world, though, as the case of the Byasses indicates, the pressure manifests itself in slightly different form. The Byasses maintain a fairly respectable roominghouse in order to supplement the income Sam makes as a clerk in the employ of a wholesale stationer. Their financial and thus their social position is precarious enough that all of their rooms have to be let, and the occasional breakage of furniture that results from Sam's frequent clowning is a matter of serious import (III, 292). Their only chance to escape from the exigencies of mere financial survival comes with the improvement in Sam's business prospects. But the change in prospects means that Sam has a new image to create and maintain. Thus more insidious social pressures are brought to bear. In order to fortify himself against these new pressures Sam takes to spending too much time in public houses and, by so doing, subjects himself to his wife's self-righteous tirades. To protect himself from these Sam seeks less reputable company and then begins to stay away from home for extended periods of time. As an indication that the marriage is disintegrating from these pressures, Sam accepts a position with his firm which necessitates long absences from home while he travels about the country. It is at this point in marriage breakdown that Jane steps in to act as peacemaker and conciliator (III, 296ff.). Peace is indeed secured for the moment, but neither Jane nor the reader is under any illusion that the same pressures will not be felt again or that it will be necessary for Jane to act once more for the sake of her friends' marriage.

> Well, well; of course it would all begin over again, Jane herself knew it. But is not all life a struggle onward from compromise to compromise, until the day of final pacification?
> (III, 298)

Although the financial situation of the Byasses eliminates the element of desperation that is so notable in the lives of those in Clerkenwell Close and Shooter's Gardens, it is clear that even those who seem to be well off are subject to the same social and financial pressures as those who are less well off. In effect, none is really in control of the physical circumstances of his life; all are victims of the environment. Whatever differences there may be between classes are differences of degree, not of kind.

In a number of respects Gissing's handling of these narrative threads is similar to that in the other novels of the first phase. With so many characters and so many careers, there is the usual multeity of threads, each seeming to exist as a gratuitous part of the whole. In addition, there is the ever recurrent problem of narrative threads which are used but not used up, as the references to Grace Rudd and Scawthorne seem to suggest. When the narrative lines are woven together, a favourite mechanical device, coincidence, is used. Joseph Snowdon's relationship to

Scawthorne and the connection between Clara and Grace Rudd are only two examples of the coincidence which is employed. Furthermore, Jane's rescue by her grandfather from the thraldom in which she is held by the Peckovers is an obvious use of the *deus ex machina*.

However, the use of such obvious devices is not so prominent in *The Nether World* as it is in some of the other novels of the first phase. Possibly Gissing's more intense focus on the lowest strata of society in a more closely circumscribed geographical area than is sometimes the case in these novels explains the more deft handling of such coincidence as there is. In addition, it might be suggested that when such devices as these are used, they tend to emphasize the utter hopelessness of the life of the disadvantaged. Not only are they the victims of the identifiable evils of the social and economic system, they are also the victims of the mysterious, and in this context, malevolent forces of the universe. In any event, the insistence on the basic similarity of pattern in each of the threads detailing the careers of those in the nether world offers positive proof of Gissing's uncompromising and, for once, uncompromised vision. Those in the nether world are being victimized, and the result of this victimization is brutalization.

A repletion of animal imagery--the dominant group in this novel--bears out man's dehumanization in the grip of economic and social forces which he is unable to mitigate in any significant way, and underlines the narrative pattern of man's gradual reduction to the bestial level. At the lowest social level, Shooter's Gardens, there is a degradation which strains credibility. As a group, as they return home from work, the labourers are described as heading "stablewards" (I, 23); families are forced "to herd together" (I, 26); and most have a "den full of children" (I, 26). Individually, Maria Candy appears in her hovel as "an animated object" (III, 199); the wounded Bob Hewett is "a stricken animal" (III, 191); and the sad Stephen Candy is "a good-hearted animal" (III, 201), sharing with his sister, Pennyloaf, a "submissive beast-of-burden look" (III, 201-02). The passive resistance of Pennyloaf to the brutal beatings she suffers at Bob's hands is seen to be characteristic of the women of this class (I, 179-80).

Bestialism is not restricted to the lowest social order. But when the "middle class" of Clerkenwell Close is considered, the images shift from those of dray horses or other passive animals of burden to those of predatory animals, those driven by their blood-lust to prey atavistically on their less fortunate neighbours. As a result, there is also here more of a sense of individual endeavour rather than the suffering herd metaphor used in connection with those in Shooter's Gardens. Those in Clerkenwell Close, like their animal counterparts, will prey upon each other if no other suitable victim presents itself. The introduction of Joseph Snowdon suggests many of the aspects of primeval man. His face has a "protuberance of the bone in front of each temple, which gave him a curiously animal aspect" (II, 5); his lower lip "hung and jutted forward" (II, 5); and when he walked he "dragged his feet" (II, 5). Later on, Sidney Kirkwood notices that Joseph has "a vicious lower lip" (II, 104).

The Peckovers are seen most often in imagery suggestive of feline and canine predators. Mrs. Peckover is "brutal" (I, 92); she "growls" (I, 94); she has "cat-like eyes" (I, 94); and on the hunt for money she is like a "jackal" (II, 75). After a career of preying on others, Mrs. Peckover herself falls victim to the even more voracious Clem. Clementina is a "cunning as well as fierce animal" (II, 61); she moves like a "lithe beast about to spring" (II, 62); in the eyes of her mother she is "a cat" (II, 64), an ungrateful "beast" (III, 165), and "a mad cat" (III, 242); she has a fierce "animal love" for Bob Hewett (III, 239); and after his death she moans "like a wild beast in pain" (III, 246). Eventually, the two "cats" quarrel over their commonly shared lover and Clem poisons her mother.

Bob Hewett is profoundly affected by the bestializing forces by which he is surrounded. In an early rivalry with "Jeck" Bartley for the affections of Clem, he and Jack fight "like wild animals" (I, 272); in courting Clem's affections later, he and Clem exchange "ferocious glances" (II, 240). He is also moved by Clem's animosity toward the hapless Pennyloaf, and this results in his further brutalization of his wife and children (III, 39ff.); and he is more than receptive to some of Clem's other animal lusts (III, 186). When circumstances close in on him, he becomes an animal in flight from the forces of the law, and he takes on the bestial aspects of those in Shooter's Gardens among whom he tries to hide.

The bestializing forces make themselves manifest even in the relatively polite social circle of the Byasses. Bessie has an "animal vitality" (II, 49); and Sam, as well as being a bad husband, is a "beast" in Bessie's view (III, 293, 294). The irreconcilable differences which arise in this marriage as a result of Sam's drinking and predilection for disreputable companionship are merely polite versions of the same kind of problem encountered in more elemental and vicious form at the lower social levels.

Even the noble Sidney Kirkwood, civilizing force that he may be, is not immune to the bestial forces that are prompted by the environment. After John Hewett has unjustly accused Kirkwood of being the author of all the ills suffered by the Hewett family, Sidney finds it difficult not to respond in kind.

> The animal in Sidney Kirkwood made it a terrible minute for him as he turned away in silence before this savage injustice. The veins upon his forehead were swollen; his clenched teeth gave an appearance of ferocity to his spirited features. With head bent, and shoulders quivering as if in supreme muscular exertion, he left the room without another word.
>
> (I, 288)

The bestialism which seems to exist on the individual level is even more pronounced when individuals gather together in a crowd or mob. There is an air of repressed violence in the crowd that listens to an impassioned John Hewett attack the injustices of the economic system (II, 151-52). In addition, there is the sublimated violence of the games of chance at the Crystal Palace, where the young bucks are invited to try their skill in throwing sticks at models made up to look like "the treacherous Afghan or the base African" (I, 259); to strike a ball by hitting an object made up of a model of the "head of some other recent foeman" (I, 259); to test their muscularity by striking a model of "a Russian" (I, 259); or to shoot at a model of "a wooden donkey" (I, 259). Such "games" are usually followed by a drink in an overcrowded refreshment hall, where resentment and pent-up emotion break out in scuffles and fights (I, 263). Finally, the sublimated violence gets more direct expression in the fight between Jack Bartley and Bob Hewett, which quickly degenerates into a general brawl (I, 273). The seemingly indigenous animal qualities of man await only the appropriate stimuli from the environment in order to receive full expression.

One of the more subtle ironies in the novel is that the middle class reader to whom the narrator addresses himself is likely to regard the London slums as the only objective expression of the nether world. Such a simplistic view is easily enough obtained as the novel depicts the effects of industrial growth on the landscape (II, 109), the brutalization of children (I, 77), which results in the bestial proclivities of an entire class, and even the bastardization of language (I, 71), which provides linguistic evidence of the semi-barbarism to which the disadvantaged have been relegated. However, the novel develops the idea that these are only the most obvious external expressions of man's bestial qualities. By drawing points of comparison between the upper classes and the lower with respect to the conduct of life in all its phases, the novel makes it clear not only that the forces of the nether world exist within man as well as without, but also that because they do exist within as well as without, all classes are victimized by those forces. Whether the points of comparison have to do with the sowing of wild oats by young men (I, 125), the encouragement of sycophants (II, 226), the imprecations used in the control of incorrigible children (III, 6), or even the acquisition of money,[23] the differences between the privileged and the poor are shown to be those of blurring degree, not of distinct kind. At one point the narrator is moved to comment wittily but incisively: "--Really, we shall soon be coming to a conclusion that the differences between the nether world and the upper world are purely superficial" (II, 226-27).

This is not to suggest that Gissing thought there were no innate differences between men. The essential aspect of man, his capacity for intellectual and spiritual growth, Gissing saw as a given. But The Nether World bears testimony to Gissing's belief that each man's innate capacity for such growth can be either given encouragement or it can be perverted, depending upon the environment in which the individual is placed. That is, as the narrative pattern and the dominant image group which supports it show, an individual can be encouraged by environmental influences to strive for nobility, selflessness, art, nature--in a word, civilization--or environmental influences can reduce him to a state of semi-barbarism which approaches bestiality, in which survival is the only criterion of success. The influence of the environment in this context is emphasized again and again. The ameliorating effects of the right kind of environment are noted in the cases of Jane and Scawthorne, in particular.

> From sixteen to three-and-twenty was the period of young Scawthorne's life which assured his future advancement--and his moral ruin. A grave, gentle, somewhat effeminate boy, with a great love of books and a wonderful application to study, he suffered so much during those years of early maturity, that, as in almost all such cases, his nature was corrupted. Pity that some self-made intellectual man of our time has not flung in the world's teeth a truthful autobiography. Scawthorne worked himself up to a position which had at first seemed unattainable; what he paid for the success was loss of all his pure ideals, of his sincerity, of his disinterestedness, of the fine perceptions to which he was born. Probably no one who is half-starved and overworked during those critical years comes out of the trial with his moral nature uninjured; to certain characters it is a wrong irreparable. To stab the root of a young tree, to hang crushing burdens upon it, to rend off its early branches,--that is

> not the treatment likely to result in growth such as nature purposed. There will come of it a vicious formation, and the principle applies also to the youth of men.
> (II, 180-81)

Environment, then, is the determining factor. But while the monied classes have it within their power to change at least the external circumstances of their lives, the poor have no such recourse or escape and must depend solely on their own inner resources such as they may be. Depending upon what the nature of those resources may be, they can then be like those in Shooter's Gardens and have no hope or even much desire for escape; or they can be like Clara Hewett and become emotional as well as financial parasites; or, in the rarest cases of all, they can be like Jane Snowdon and Sidney Kirkwood, acting as inspirations by being civilizing and humanizing agents in a social and moral milieu the characterizing conditions of which are bleak despair and darkness.

In any event, Gissing's characters in this novel--ranging in importance from such flat figures as Drake, the drama teacher, of whom nothing else is heard, and Mrs. Todd, the widow with whom Pennyloaf joins forces after Bob's death, to the more central figures such as Pennyloaf, Kirkwood and Jane--remain static. They cannot be said to develop as a result of an internal re-orientation of values: they simply react to the forces of the environment around them. Kirkwood's nobility, Jane's self-effacing martyrdom, and Clem's viciousness are in evidence from first to last. These characters and the others in the novel are, in effect, exempla of the informing idea.

In an attempt to cover the full range of experience in this nether world, Gissing has recourse to one of his principal devices in the novels of the first phase, a multeity of fictive beings at all levels. But while this approach may provide the necessary plenitude of experience--from the 'upper class' Byasses through the 'middle class' Kirkwood to the absolutely destitute Candys on the lowest rung of the social ladder--it also tends to deflect the attention of the reader away from Jane and Sidney, who are clearly designed to be the central figures, and who should therefore command that attention. Gissing seems to be more interested in multiplying examples than he is in focusing the reader's attention on the experiences of the central figures. In addition, this approach emphasizes Gissing's continuing difficulty with appropriate subordination of the minor characters. There is an undue emphasis on the character of Scawthorne, for example, whose chief function seems to be to show the truth of the narrator's comments about the effects of environment on character. This seems redundant at best since the point has already been secured by the careers and characters of Kirkwood, Snowdon and Clara Hewett. At worst, the practice leads to the dangerous diffusion of intensity and interest. M. C. Donnelly's recognition of the importance of Jane, but at the same time her assertion that the dominant figure in the novel is Clem Peckover provide another indication of the seriousness of this deflection of interest.[24] With a more appropriate sense of proportion and subordination in the creation of character, this sometimes fatal deflection of interest away from the central figures would not occur. In the later novels, as Gissing learned perforce the art of commanding and retaining the centrality of interest for the major figures, this deflection does not occur.

The narrator performs the same function in this novel as he does in the other novels of the first phase. He is omnipresent to remind the reader of what it is that is being shown and to interpret its significance for him. This narrator, as Sherif Nur so aptly puts it, takes the social question as far as it will go.[25] The upper class reader is taken on a tour of a world the existence of which he never suspected. He is invited to examine the conditions in which some people are obliged to exist, to consider the effect that such conditions have on lives that seem already to be doomed, to note the points of similarity between this fearful world and the reader's own world of manor house and country estate, and by implication to recognize the common humanity of all men in determining the moral responsibility for what he sees.

On occasion, the narrator can be wryly humorous, as when he discerns some perhaps disconcerting similarities between classes (II, 226-27). But most often he is clearly in deadly earnest as he examines first one life, then another, and yet another for the blighting influence, for the perversion of nature. Never content merely to dramatize and to let this dramatization convey its own message, the narrator continually directs the reader's attention. In the consideration of the various social strata to be found even among the poor, the narrator candidly admits that, "I was led to do so in thinking of Bob Hewett" (I, 166). He then goes on to provide, as he most often does, a biography of the figure in question in order to establish as scientifically and rationally as may be the reasons for Bob's mode of thinking and thus for his behaviour. In almost every case, the narrator is constantly conducting a show in which he narrates and then comments on human behaviour. Some indication of the narrator's intention and methodology can be seen even in the chapter headings. One chapter dealing with Clara Hewett is entitled "Pathological." In the chapter, all the elements, social, biological, psychological, that have been at work in shaping the character of Clara Hewett are examined in an attempt to understand what and who she is. The same procedure is used on many another character in the novel. In many respects, Gissing's practice in the novels of the first phase approximates the approach to novelistic fiction insofar as it pretended to investigate the significance of human life advocated by Emile Zola.[26] Such a procedure in Gissing's rendition of it means that the narrator and, because of his continuing presence, the reader are distanced from the fiction. This distancing means that character and narrative are never allowed to exist in their own right: they exist only insofar as they demonstrate the central idea which informs the novel. But in this novel, as in perhaps no other novel of the first phase, the narrator and narrative are in accord: in Gissing's nether world, life as lived by the victims is a hell from which there is no escape.

In the handling of such fictive elements as narrative line, characterization, and point of view, Gissing, in _The Nether World_, achieved a novel which realizes the full potential of its form. It is the only novel of the first phase which does so and, because it does, it is a novel of unremitting power. Vision and vehicle have been duly married.

As Jacob Korg notes, almost a decade after Gissing had eschewed the hopes of social amelioration offered by Positivism,[27] _The Nether World_ provides proof that he had indeed finally given up any expectation of this sort. The only remaining hope of affirmation was to turn to the individual himself, to expose in a more dramatic way those inner resources that sustain a Kirkwood or a Jane Snowdon in the face of the vicissitudes that life presents. This emphasis on the individual and on the exposition of those inner resources on which a character depends in order to cope better with a world seemingly bent on its own destruction is the matter of the second phase of Gissing's career. But in order to dramatize this matter, he was obliged to turn to another method, to another technique, especially with respect to the structure of his novels.

Chapter III

Phase The Second

1. "A New Key"

After the death of his first wife, Gissing became intensely interested in what was for him the relatively new field of psychology. In the latter years of the eighties and the early part of the nineties he read such books as George Romanes' *Animal Intelligence* and Paul Bourget's *Essais de psychologie contemporaine*, which are, as M. C. Donnelly points out, studies of the activities of animals and men that attempt to account for animal and human behaviour without any recourse to metaphysical causes.[1] Even without the benefit of such external evidence as this a reading of such novels as *The Emancipated*, *In The Year of Jubilee*, *The Odd Women*, *Denzil Quarrier*, and *Born in Exile* provides plenty of evidence of Gissing's shift toward the depiction of inner process in his orientation to his material. Effectively, a different approach to the material resulted in a different structure for the fiction itself.

It must not be thought, however, that in this new methodology Gissing moved toward new material as well. By attempting to internalize the conflicts that the chief characters of the second phase novels have, Gissing provides some indication of the forces at work in shaping the individual's response to the world around him. If in the first phase novels the reader is treated to an external view--largely that of the omniscient narrator--of the individual's struggle to accommodate himself to his environment, in the second phase novels he is offered a more internalized view, that is to say a view often promoted from within the individualized consciousness, of the individual's struggle with that same environment. But while in these novels there is an explicit recognition that in his flaws of character the individual may be contributing to his own lack of success, there is no sense of any lessening of the intractibility of the environment itself. Further, there is no significant sense--despite the presence of some suggestive passages in Born in Exile--of the modern experimental novelist's interest in psychological process simply as process. There is rather the sense of Gissing's trying to effect a more dramatic rendering of his fictive characters' conflicts internally as well as externally. What is accomplished by this attempt is a more dynamic rendition of the characters' conflicts with the world and within themselves, a greater appreciation of the characters as complex, fictive creations, and a more just understanding of the difficulty of simplistic answers to complex questions.

The reasons for this shift in orientation may be several. For one thing, as Jacob Korg points out, Victorian society itself was in the process of change: it became much less easy to typify the various segments of Victorian society in the last two decades of the century than it might have been for an earlier period. As Korg suggests:

> Toward the end of the century, when The Emancipated was written, a reaction to the rigid Puritanism of the mid-century was under way, although there had been no real change in the underlying emotional and economic facts of bourgeois civilization. The mid-Victorian businessman had been proud of his independence and thrift, but his counterpart of the eighties preferred to display his wealth. The children of people who had sought edification in prayers, church-going, and moral sentiment turned to art galleries, concerts, the theatre, and less respectable indulgences in their search for adventure and enlightenment. Puritanism began to fade. The new middle class began to look to the older aristocratic standard of manners as its model. As a result, Gissing's treatment of the bourgeoisie in The Emancipated and later novels was somewhat more complicated than that of Dickens, for he had to deal with the gradual changes that were beginning to mask the rock-ribbed qualities of an older generation personified by such characters as Pecksniff and Dombey.[2]

In effect, a more complex vision of society demands a different and perhaps more complex æsthetic response.

Another possible reason for the shift in orientation was a change in personal conviction about society on Gissing's part. As already suggested, Gissing's novels of the first phase constitute his exploration of the problems of society on a broad scale. The Nether World seems to offer novelistic proof that he had finally despaired of any meaningful social amelioration. What remained for him to do was to explore more intensely the response of the sensitive individual to society's demands. At least one quite recent study suggests that Gissing, having exhausted the possibilities of what are called the novels of social concern, could only turn inward to a consideration of the individual consciousness for his material.[3]

Possibly more important than any other reason for his shift was Gissing's growing recognition that his own approach to the novel--modeled on that of his great English predecessors--was unsuited to his purposes in the expression of his changing attitudes toward life, society and the individual. Aside from whatever readings he may have done in contemporary scientific and pseudo-scientific works, Gissing read even more widely than before in the works of contemporary, continental writers. According to Donnelly, even though he read Zola, his especial favourites included the Goncourts, de Maupassant, Flaubert, Tolstoy, Turgenev, Dostoievsky, and Ibsen.[4] In their respective approaches to fiction, as well as their intrepidity in dealing with previously untouched areas of human experience, and in the strength of their ideas, Gissing found something more congenial for his own developing art and changing ideas. Generally speaking, a more clinical, objective approach, a greater dramatic immediacy, and a greater profundity in the depiction of the individual character are among the elements that Gissing discerned in the writings of the continentals and which he tried to incorporate into his own writings.

Gissing's concern as early as 1885 with his tendency to write biographies rather than to suggest dramatically the conflicts he wished to portray[5] indicates the direction in which he wished to move and did move, albeit with excruciating slowness. He was involved, as Donnelly suggests, in freeing himself from the conventions of the mid-Victorian novel which he had inherited from the acknowledged masters of the form in England.[6] Such a process of emancipation is seldom accomplished quickly or in any simple linear progression.

One of the immediate and most obvious gains in Gissing's new approach is that in characterization. With an increased emphasis on the psychological processes of the individual, there is a concomitant depth in the depiction of character. Further, rather than being merely static embodiments of such opposing forces as nature and industrialization, the central figures in the new key are dynamic and changing. While they may well operate on a symbolic level, they are also vital, developing personalities whose conflicts and inner torments are presented in a dramatic way. In characters such as Miriam Baske and Cecily Doran (The Emancipated), Nancy Lord (In The Year of Jubilee), Denzil Quarrier (Denzil Quarrier), Rhoda Nunn (The Odd Women), and Godwin Peak (Born in Exile) Gissing achieves a depth, a conviction and a credibility in character creation that the novels of the eighties--despite an orientation toward the psychological processes of the characters in Isabel Clarendon--simply cannot match. The example of Miriam Baske, one of the central female figures in The Emancipated, is a convenient one.

At the outset of the novel, Miriam is a young widow, just recently released from the bondage of an oppressive marriage. Her upbringing has also been oppressively puritan, but in her case the passage of the years has merely fanned her ardour for her faith. One of her numerous philanthropic projects is to build an expensive chapel for her fellow townsfolk which will serve as an indication of her social concern and, more importantly, as a tangible proof of her religious commitment. She is, then, initially the epitome of English puritanism, which is further emphasized by her thin, severe, pale, physical appearance. On a visit to Italy with friends she comes under the influence of the "degenerate" civilization she says she abhors and, however unwillingly at first, begins her pilgrimage to cultural and spiritual emancipation from the deadening effects of her English environment. Her pilgrimage is aided by her association with Cecily Doran, who, as a result of a daringly experimental education, has already been freed from dead conventions and by her growing love for Ross Mallard, a middle-aged bachelor, who has secured his own emancipation through art. The struggle in Miriam's mind is twofold: on the one hand there is the conflict between her long-standing religious convictions and the life-giving warmth and beauty of the Italian environment; on the other hand there is the difficulty caused by what she believes are Ross' feelings for Cecily and her own growing love for him. Ultimately, her decisions to build a public bath rather than a chapel, and to marry Ross rather than lead a life of deadly and deadening self-righteous widow-hood provide uniquely ironic and satisfying solutions to her inner conflicts. At the novel's conclusion, Miriam's emancipation is complete.

Despite, as Donnelly notes, the unfortunate tendency toward summary in the latter half of the novel,[7] Miriam's conflicts at the various levels are dramatic and convincing. Rather than being presented with a figure who is static and who is supposed to elicit sympathy because she is frustrated in her ambitions by an uncaring social structure, or because special pleas by the narrator say that she is admirable, the reader is presented with a character whose inner conflicts are convincingly dramatic and to whom the reader responds because she seems human in her attempts to resolve those conflicts.

The same process of dynamic change can be seen in such other figures from other novels as Nancy Lord, Rhoda Nunn and Godwin Peak. In each instance, the character is shown as having some inner conflict which has to be resolved and, in each case, it is in the dramatic resolution of that conflict that the interest lies. Effectively, the chief structural element of the new key is the developing personality.

The emphasis on internalizing the conflicts that the individual may have has other important æsthetic ramifications. With the conflicts of the characters internalized, the novel, of necessity has to focus its attention on fewer characters. This does not necessarily mean that a novel such as In The Year of Jubilee has fewer characters than a novel such as The Unclassed. It does mean, however, that in the former novel fewer characters receive more full treatment than is the case in the latter. His new mode led Gissing, almost inadvertently, toward the practice of a much needed sense of discrimination and subordination in the matter of creating character. He was learning, as Donnelly suggests, ". . . that a novel can have more than one hero and one heroine without also scattering intensity and interest."[8]

Another important result of the new key is that the narratives of the novels of the second phase are much less confusing and much less obviously contrived in a mechanical sense than are the earlier novels of the eighties. A greater emphasis on fewer characters accounts for the change in part. But, in addition to this, whereas the novels of the second phase detail the inner responses of the individual to his environment, the novels of the first phase tend to emphasize the point that no matter where the individual turns he is unlikely to be successful because of the unyielding nature of his environment. In the earlier mode, the only ways that Gissing could find to convey this sense of hopelessness are to multiply the experiences of one individual beyond all plausibility or to multiply the number of characters undergoing such experiences. The result, all too often, is that a confusing number of characters have an equally confusing number of experiences, with characters and narrative threads only coincidentally related. In order to secure even this kind of frail unity, the early novels often have recourse to the use of the most obvious mechanical devices. This is not to suggest that in the novels of the second phase Gissing suddenly abandoned some of his favourite devices, such as peculiar wills. By the time that The Emancipated was published the unusual will had become a stock Gissing convention, and it remained a convention throughout his career. But, in the later phases of that career, the unusual will serves as a means to an end and not as an end in itself. An unusual will serves In The Year of Jubilee as the means whereby the reader can trace the abnormal stresses placed on Nancy Lord as a result of her clandestine marriage to Lionel Tarrant. In the novels of the first phase, the unusual will is often employed to provide another example of the malevolence of the universe in which the individual must try to survive.

The reduction in the number of the narrative threads in the second phase novels by no means indicates that Gissing suddenly abandoned his practice of parallelling characters and characters' lives. Even a cursory reading of these novels shows that this is still one of Gissing's favourite devices in order to achieve his effects. But through a proper subordination, with an appropriate sense of perspective, the novels of this phase achieve a focus and an intensity that the earlier novels, for the most part, lack. Rather than diffusing the interest, all too often a failing in the first phase novels, the introduction of the narratives concerning the Denyer sisters (The Emancipated) and the French sisters (In The Year of Jubilee) serves to intensify the main thrust of the respective novels. In the case of Godwin Peak (Born in Exile) the chief contrast lies in the difference between Peak's ideals at the outset and those at the end of the novel. The experiences of the secondary characters serve to complement those of Peak rather than detracting from them. In each of these instances, an intensification of the focus, so obviously lacking in the novels of the first phase, is achieved.

One of the most interesting aspects of Gissing's new key is what Desmond Pacey calls the virtual elimination of the narrator as editorial omniscience.[9] In these novels not only is there a much reduced role for the narrator in quantitative terms, there is a change in function as well. No longer does the narrator serve as an explicit commentator on the action or on the characters that are presented. Rather, he tends to be merely an observer with an almost clinically detached objectivity about what is taking place. The narrator in these novels seems to be Gissing's attempt to demonstrate in novelistic form the truth of Bourget's categorical pronouncement that, ". . . il n'y a ni maladie ni santé de l'âme, il n'y a que les états psychologiques au point de la vue de l'observateur sans metaphysique."[10] No longer is the reader explicitly guided by an egregious narrator to sights unimagined by the upper class reader; no longer is the omniscient, ubiquitous presence there to explain, interpret, expostulate, or otherwise serve as pedagogue or preacher for a pre-determined end. Instead, the characters are discovered in a particular situation, the complicating factors to physical and psychological quiescence are introduced and reader and narrator alike observe the drama as it unfolds. Gissing's narrator in these novels approximates the position of Joyce's artist who, ". . . remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails."[11]

The changed function for Gissing's narrator may well have resulted in the first instance from Gissing's shaken confidence in the rightness of his prescriptions for society's ills. It was patently obvious to him that all the things he had most feared would happen were coming to pass. The Education Act of 1870 provided more people with more educational opportunity and seemed to Gissing to be chiefly responsible for what he referred to as the masses of semi-literate people who were demanding political power. The commercialization and industrialization of British life were proceeding apace, and nationalistic pride was rapidly degenerating into an imperialistic fervour. Social, political, and cultural barbarism seemed closer than ever. In the face of this, Gissing's notion of the necessity for a meritocracy based on intellectual capability, if not on social class, was clearly out of its time and place. Not even an omniscient narrator can pretend to instruct those who will not learn. All that might be done was to watch as rationally as possible the process of change.

Even more important than this, however, was the growing strength of Gissing's conviction that it is more artistic merely to suggest, to set the scene and then to allow the drama to play itself out from its own indigenous forces rather than to attempt to be too obviously didactic.[12] The following paragraphs from The Odd Women, detailing the arrangements made about the disposition of the Widdowson household and the care of Monica's child, made in the highly charged emotional aftermath of Monica's death, illustrate something of the newly achieved objectivity.

> On the day after the funeral--Monica was buried in the cemetery, which is hard by the old church--Widdowson and the elder sister had a long conversation in private. It related first of all to the motherless baby. Widdowson's desire was that Miss Madden should undertake the care of the child. She and Virginia might live wherever they preferred; their needs would be provided for. Alice had hardly dared to hope for such a proposal--as it concerned the child, that is to say. Gladly she accepted it. . . . The large house was to be abandoned and as much of the furniture as seemed needful transported to a smaller dwelling in another part of Clevedon. For Alice resolved to stay here in spite of painful associations. She loved the place, and looked forward with quiet joy to the life that was prepared for her. Widdowson's books would

> go back to London; not to the Hampstead lodgings, however. Fearful of solitude, he proposed to his friend Newdick that they should live together, he as a man of substance, bearing the larger share of the expense. And this plan also came into execution.[13]

With so much of the conflict internalized, it seems inevitable that a narrator as editorial omniscience will have a much less obvious role to play. But Gissing seems to have become convinced that a much less obvious role for his narrator was not only necessary, it was æsthetically desirable.

A greater profundity in characterization, a less confusing narrative line, a more dramatic presentation of the conflicts, and a changed role for the narrator mark the novels of the second phase of Gissing's career. But while these novels have undoubted strengths which are so obviously lacking in the novels of the first phase, they are not without their own peculiar weaknesses. After a dramatically convincing and therefore promising first half, *The Emancipated* tends in its second half, as Donnelly notes, to degenerate into mere summaries, resumés, telling rather than showing.[14] In *The Odd Women*, the Madden sisters, the ostensible centres of interest, get shunted aside as the clash of personalities between Everard Barfoot and Rhoda Nunn assumes primary interest. Possibly just as disturbing as these is the fact that in the creation of individual personalities the environment or background against which these personalities act and re-act is occasionally too vaguely realized, too ephemeral. Any tendency of this kind in the novels of the first phase is more than compensated for by the continuing presence of the narrator. But in most of the novels of the second phase the reader is cut off from this reliable touchstone of objective reality and is left with the subjective reality of the flawed perceptions of the fallible characters. While it may be legitimate for the characters in a novel to be confused, the novel itself cannot afford to mirror that confusion in æsthetic incoherence, or vagueness.

While it does not escape unscathed from some of the weaknesses which it shares with the other novels of the second phase, _Born in Exile_ has more of the newly discovered strengths and fewer of the weaknesses. An examination in some detail of the novel reveals more adequately the shift in Gissing's notions about the structural aspects of the novel, and shows that this is his most accomplished performance in the novels of the second phase.

2. Born in Exile

Born in Exile is Gissing's most probing analysis of the individual who discovers that he is alienated from the values of the society in which he lives. All of the previously published novels deal with the abrasive relationship which seems almost of necessity to exist between the sensitive individual and an indifferent, indeed usually hostile, society. However, none of the novels published prior to Born in Exile is more uncompromising in the pursuit of its goal: to trace the effects, psychological and social, on the sensibilities of the individual whose values differ so radically from those of his society. In this novel there is none of the diffusion of interest caused by too many undiscriminated characters, too many narrative threads, or too many abstract issues such as mar a number of the earlier novels. Here, Gissing demonstrates that he learned the art of the proper subordination of parts. Godwin Peak is the centre of attention, and everything else is subordinated to him as subject. Two later novels with the same kind of psychological orientation, The Odd Women and Denzil Quarrier, are not so probing in their respective analyses and, as studies of the individual temperament, are lesser achievements.

In Godwin Peak Gissing provides the quintessential figure of the young man, fairly bred but without money, which so pre-occupied his imagination. This figure is prominent in his novels because, according to a number of critics, the character seems often to be little more than a fictive version of Gissing himself.[15] One student, R. L. Selig, goes so far as to state that the account of Peak's career at Whitelaw College is the fictive redaction of Gissing's own ill-starred career at Owens College in Manchester.[16] However, such critical views of the possible sources for the novel as these, even if accurate, imply that there is little more to the book than a particularly virulent form of literary narcissism. Furthermore, such comments offer little insight to the novel as novel. Whatever wells of personal experience Gissing may have drawn from, it soon becomes evident from the novel that Peak is not Gissing. For the most part, the narrator of the novel maintains the necessary distance which results in the creation of a thoroughly credible fictional character and not merely a persona whining a special plea for its creator.

The main external narrative thread in the novel traces the progress through life of an individual who, through heredity and economic circumstances, feels himself confined to a class of society for which his own temperament and education have made him unfit. He decides to take his destiny into his own hands and to do so adopts a course of action which he hopes will effectively remove him from his own class to another which is more congenial to his cultural and intellectual aspirations. The conflict in the novel arises not because the hero has in mind a mean end, but because in violation of his own moral postulates he uses ignoble means in an attempt to secure the end he wants.

Godwin Peak is the individual who is placed by fate in the lower middle class. But his early distinction as a student and the social pretensions of his maternal relatives provide him with the conviction, if not the means to secure it, of social and cultural superiority to his peers. Peak is provided with a bursary which enables him to attend Whitelaw College, where he establishes an excellent academic record. His studies at Whitelaw are interrupted by the plans of a London relative to establish a restaurant in the immediate vicinity of the college. Fearing the social ignominy to which he feels this would subject him, Peak goes to London to pursue other studies.

In London, locked into employment which quickly becomes drudgery and which seems unlikely to advance his dream of improving his social status, Peak decides that only marriage to an upper class woman will effect his social liberation. By accident, Peak encounters an old friend from college days and is re-introduced to the friend's family, especially to an attractive younger sister. Recognizing that he has here a remarkable opportunity for social advancement, Peak unexpectedly announces his intention to study for holy orders, despite the fact that such an intention runs counter to everything he has hitherto believed in. A clergyman is not restricted to any one class in his attempt to find a suitable wife, Peak recalls.

In Exeter, Peak does his utmost to ingratiate himself with his friend's family in general and with the younger sister in particular. He affects all the mannerisms, opinions, and behaviour that he knows will appeal to them. Just as he seems about to succeed in his plan to marry his way out of what he considers to be social inferiority, a series of unforeseen circumstances reveals his bogus intentions to the others and he is forced to withdraw out of disgrace.

He, then, goes to Bristol to take up his old London trade in an attempt to forget his disgrace, and while there he is provided with yet another opportunity to change his social circumstances when he is made beneficiary to an annuity. He renews his suit of the friend's sister, is refused, and leaves England to pursue a new life as a gentleman of leisure in other lands. Shortly thereafter he dies, a lonely figure to the end.

Such a bald summary of the action hardly does justice to the novel. If this were an adequate summary of what occurs in the novel, such critics as Jacob Korg would be justified in claiming that the "plot line" is thin,[17] and that the book is replete with long, tedious, and largely repetitious conversations.[18] The point is, however, that the action of the novel is largely within rather than without: what is of crucial importance is not what happens to Peak, but what he thinks is happening and the effects of what he thinks of himself as a human being. Gissing sets out to depict, with almost clinical objectivity, the interior landscape of Peak's mind, and it is within this landscape that the important events of the novel occur.

The opening pages of the novel establish the important aspects of Godwin Peak: his sense of intellectual superiority to his family, his sense of social superiority to his peers, his sense of moral integrity, his idealization of the upper classes and the attendant vague but powerful urge to win a place for himself in that sphere of society. Above all, these pages depict with power and conviction Peak's morbid pre-occupation with the self, a preoccupation which disposes him to regard others merely as types who exist to confirm him in the veracity of his own beliefs. The novel, then, is structured around the development of Peak's personality, and the result is a convincing portrait of what it means to the sensitive individual to be "born in exile" and to live one's life there.

In a certain sense, Peak's alienation from the social, spiritual, and intellectual values of his family circle foreshadows the process of his alienation from the values of his whole social milieu. What takes place within the family in Peak's early years expands in later years to affect his relationship with the whole of society. In each arena of action there is the conviction of superiority, an exacerbation of spirit, an attempt at rationalization, a change of ideals necessitated by expediency, and finally an acceptance of the ineluctable. The experiences are, however, not merely repetitious. The later experiences recall the earlier ones, but they are more complex because the issues are more involved. Above all, both sets of experiences serve to emphasize Peak's developing personality, which is the subject of the novel.

It is Peak's immediate family with their sense of social superiority not only to their neighbours, but even to other members of related branches of the family that sets the whole process of Peak's alienation in motion. This sense of superiority to the neighbours is engendered first of all by a sense of class consciousness. In addition, there is the annuity which constitutes the family income, and finally there is Mrs. Peak's elder sister, Miss Cadman, who encourages the sense of social superiority by sending her nephews off to school so that they might not be, "running about the town as errand-boys or the like."[19] The immediate result of such an attitude is to encourage family solidarity, and to encourage a sense of difference which sets the family apart from their middle class neighbours who are obliged to work for a living.

The feeling of superiority felt by Peak's immediate family circle to other members of related branches of the family is equally strong. It is early established that Mrs. Peak demeaned herself by marrying Nicholas Peak (I, 46), and the untimely death of her husband provides Mrs. Peak and her sister with a feeling of release in more than one sense.

> To Mrs. Peak her husband's death was not an occasion of unmingled mourning. For the last few years she had suffered severely from domestic discord, and when left at peace by bereavement she turned with a sense of liberation to the task of caring for her children's future . . . .
>
> Long ago she had repented the marriage which connected her with such a family as that of the Peaks, and she ardently desired that the children, now exclusively her own, might enter life on a plane superior to their father's.
>
> (I, 49, 52)

This is felt by all of the members of Peak's immediate family circle, but by none more ardently than Peak himself, especially after his mother verbalizes her feeling of distaste for her dead husband's brother (I, 124-25). This merely confirms Peak's own predilection to see his uncle Andrew as a type of "low born" individual whom one with social standing must eschew.

But while the rest of Peak's immediate family is content to establish, at least in their own minds, their social superiority to their neighbours and their Cockney relatives, Peak carries the process one step further and becomes convinced of his own special superiority to the rest of his immediate family circle. A consciousness of his aunt's shopkeeping, his brother's taste for the popular fashions in music and clothes, and his sister's religious convictions serve to set Peak apart from them. His contempt for those closest to him causes Peak some feelings of guilt, but he is able after some effort to rationalize his attitude toward them. His mother and his sister are, after all, merely women, and his brother is inclined to follow whatever the common herd decrees. His relationship with his aunt is more difficult to deal with. He owes much to her because it is due to her influence and encouragement that he has been provided with the opportunity to advance. Peak recognizes all this, and yet because she operates a milliner's shop he cannot help holding her in social contempt. He is able to rationalize his hypocritical behaviour to her by considering that she is merely society's instrument in providing him with what he feels is compensation for the cruel trick of fate in placing him in a lower social class than is his due. This relationship and the same kind of thinking on Peak's part are echoed in the later episodes with Lady Whitelaw; in both cases Peak takes as his due the material aid and encouragement proffered by the ladies, while at the same time he holds them in contempt.

Eventually, Peak feels himself alienated from the members of his own family, from his social peers, and from all that middle class Twybridge connotes:

> He loathed the penurious simplicity to which his life was condemned; all familiar circumstances were become petty, coarse, vulgar, in his eyes; the contrast with the idealised world of his ambition plunged him into despair . . . . However much or little might result from the three years at college, it was clear to Godwin that his former existence had passed into infinite remoteness; he was no longer fit for Twybridge, no longer a companion for his kindred. Oliver, whose dullness as a schoolboy gave no promise of future achievements, was now learning the business of a seedsman; his brother felt ashamed when

> he saw him at work in the shop, and had small patience with the comrades to whom Oliver dedicated his leisure. Charlotte was estranged by religious differences. Only for his mother did the young man show increased consideration. To his aunt he endeavoured to be grateful, but his behaviour in her presence was elaborate hypocrisy. Hating the necessity for this, he laid the blame on fortune which had decreed his birth in a social sphere where he must ever be an alien.
>
> (I, 83-4)

After he goes to London, first to study at the Royal School of Mines, and then, in another switch, to work in a chemical factory, Peak has as little to do as he can with Twybridge and his family. On one of his few visits to see his mother, he is, "almost suffocated by the air of shopkeeping" (I, 202) which hangs over the family circle. Because he is a young man--the narrator early in the novel keeps insisting on Peak's youth--he resents what he considers to be the ignobility of spirit displayed by others. His intellect draws a deliberate distinction between those who choose an ignoble course willingly and those who are forced into such a course by expediency. He sees himself in the latter light and his family in the former.

> . . . the air of shopkeeping he was compelled to breathe when he visited Twybridge nauseated and repelled him. He recognised the suitability both of Oliver and Charlotte for the positions to which life had consigned them--they suffered from no profitless aspiration; but it seemed to him a just cause of quarrel with fate that his kindred should thus have relapsed, instead of bettering the rank their father had bequeathed to them. He would not avow to such friends as Moxey and Earwaker the social standing of his only recognised relatives.
>
> (I, 202)

Ultimately, Peak comes to realize that although his aunt is, and what his sister and brother have become makes a mockery of his own social pretensions on natural grounds, they are not merely reconciled to what life has decreed: they are content to be what they are. He cannot change them to be what he would make them; indeed, it is unlikely that they would want to be other than what they are. Peak's realization of this implies more than just acceptance. It is a realization of the differences among individuals.

> His sister, Mrs. Cusse, was happy in her husband, her children, and a flourishing business. Oliver was making money, and enjoyed distinction among the shopkeeping community. His aunt still dealt in millinery, and kept up her acquaintance with respectable families. To Godwin all was like a dream dreamt for the second time. He could not acknowledge any actual connection between these people and himself. But their characteristics no longer gravely offended him, and he willingly recognised the homespun worth which their lives displayed.
>
> (III, 156)

Accompanying this conclusion there is no startling flash of insight, only a sense of a young man's having achieved a certain degree of maturity in the development of his personality.

When Peak's activities expand to the world beyond his immediate family circle and Twybridge, he initially tends to associate social and cultural superiority with material wealth alone. His visit as a student to Thornhaw, the Warricombe estate at Kingsmill, and his nocturnal walks past the homes of the wealthy, set in their awe-inspiring suburban surroundings, convince him that he belongs in the world of the owners of such houses: in this social class, he thinks, repose those cultural and social values which he takes as his own. His obsequiousness to the wealthy students with whom he wishes to associate at Whitelaw College is an index of his intense longing to change social status.

Peak's rather simplistic view of the matter of social and cultural values undergoes a radical revision when he discovers Lady Whitelaw reading a newspaper just prior to her interview with him. What he conceives to be the obvious ignobility of her mind so offends Peak that he scarcely veils his contempt for her throughout the rest of the interview (I, 150ff.).

After the interview with Lady Whitelaw, Peak decides that birth and breeding are necessary components in trying to guarantee the nobility of purpose, spirit, culture, and right values which he takes to be the innate marks of a ruling class. The appearance of the wealthy and noble of birth is sufficient to evoke Peak's admiration and to confirm his new conviction. In London, he encounters two ladies in their carriage caught up in a traffic jam in a crowded street.

> He chanced to be in Hyde Park on the occasion of some public ceremony, and was brought to pause at the edge of a gaping plebian crowd drawn up to witness the passing of aristocratic

> vehicles. Close in front of him an open carriage came to a stop; in it sat, or rather reclined, two ladies, old and young. Upon this picture Godwin fixed his eyes with the intensity of fascination; his memory never lost the impress of these ladies. Nothing very noteworthy about them; but to Godwin they conveyed a passionate perception of all that is implied in social superiority. Here he stood, one of a multitude, of the herd; shoulder to shoulder with boors and pickpockets; and within reach of his hand reposed those two ladies, in Olympian calm, seeming unaware even of the existence of the throng. Now they exchanged a word; now they smiled to each other. How delicate was the moving of their lips! On the box sat an old coachman and a young footman . . . .
>
> They were his equals, those ladies; merely his equals. With such as they he should by right of nature associate.
>
> . . . Of mere wealth he thought not; might he only be recognised by the gentle of birth and breeding for what he really was, and be rescued from the promiscuity of the vulgar! (I, 204-05)

It does not take Peak long, however, to learn that matters of the intellect are no more characteristic of those indigenous to the class than they are to such nouveaux riches as Lady Whitelaw. In a conversation with his friend, Earwaker, Peak even goes so far as to deny that intellectual distinction matters. Soon Peak finds himself in a paradoxical position: he attempts to identify himself with a class of society whose social, cultural and political values he continues to revere, but whose intellectual values he has come to scorn.

Two scenes in the novel dramatize effectively the accommodation which Peak's sensibilities must make so that he may find a place with the social aristocrats. One of the scenes is the interview with Lady Whitelaw, already referred to, and the other is a scene with Mrs. Warricombe at the Warricombe estate in Exeter. The two scenes have a number of suggestive similarities and revealing differences. In both scenes Peak deliberately seeks private conversation with women who have it within their power to grant or deny Peak's desire; in both cases Peak must try to make a favourable impression despite the fact that he is uneasy at having to encounter the women on their own ground; in both cases Peak is conscious of playing the hypocrite. But the two scenes, despite these similarities, are more remarkable for their differences, and these differences are suggestive of Peak's developing thought.

In the scene with Lady Whitelaw, the young Peak finds it extremely difficult to convey to her what he wants to say. It has been made quite clear that to this point in his life he is not adept at social pleasantries, especially with women. More importantly, having discovered her reading a newspaper, he immediately decides that she is his cultural and intellectual inferior. During the interview itself he can scarcely veil his disdain of her and finds it nearly impossible to answer in any very gratifying way the questions of a woman who seems genuinely interested in helping a promising young man to secure a future. It is sheer financial expediency that forces Peak to play out the charade, and at its conclusion he rushes home to draft a letter eschewing all further aid from her. That he eventually gets

Lady Whitelaw's aid is testimony to the ease with which his increasingly pragmatic nature adapts to new situations and to her sense of understanding and benevolence.

In the scene with Mrs. Warricombe, Peak seeks her out deliberately since he is well aware that of all the Warricombes it is she who has the strongest reservations about his intentions. His deliberately making casual conversation with her is an obvious attempt to ingratiate himself to her and to disarm whatever suspicions she may have. The relative ease with which Peak now mouths conventionalities to a woman he considers to be inferior in intellect is in marked contrast to the difficulty he has had in the past in talking to the same woman and in dealing with Lady Whitelaw. The congeniality of the exchange masks the importance of the interview to Peak's plans. As Lady Whitelaw's money and influence were important to Peak's earlier dream, so Mrs. Warricombe's good will is essential to Peak's scheme to emancipate himself from social inferiority by marrying Sidwell Warricombe. As in the earlier scene, Peak is conscious of playing the hypocrite, and this consciousness is attended by vestiges of conscience. But this time conscience is more easily dismissed and, after a moment's reflection, Peak's attention is focused elsewhere.

> Uttering these commonplaces with an air of reflection, he observed that they did not cost him the self-contempt which was wont to be his penalty for concession to the terms of polite gossip; rather, his mind accepted with gratitude this rare repose. He tasted some-

> thing of the tranquil self-contempt which makes life so enjoyable when one has never seen a necessity for shaping original remarks. No one in this room would despise him for a platitude, were it recommended with a pleasant smile. With the Moxeys, with Earwaker, he durst not thus have spoken.
> (I, 274)

Peak's quiescence of conscience is caused by his willingness to accept the social reality of the situation since it serves his purposes to do so. Thus the commonplace qualities of mind which he damns in Lady Whitelaw are metamorphosed in Peak's mind to positive virtues in Mrs. Warricombe.

These two scenes, then, constitute a rhythm in the novel which serves as an index to Peak's developing personality. In this instance the scenes chart Peak's development in social terms, and help to keep the focus of the novel on the central figure.

At the novel's conclusion Peak is rescued from his commonplace occupation at St. Helen's by the benevolence of still another woman, Marcella Moxey. Upon her death, she leaves all her money to Peak, enabling him to pursue whatever course he wishes. Although he thereby achieves financial independence, Peak is unconvinced of his own social respectability. Thus he renews his suit of Sidwell Warricombe, although, ironically, his suit now may be prompted as much by genuine feeling for her as it is for the social respectability she personifies. When he is refused by her, he must content himself with wandering in cultural and social exile. In the social sense Peak learns that he must reconcile himself to being an exile, just as he had to reconcile himself to the ineradicable differences between himself and his family. The fact that he is able to do so with apparent ease is evidence of his continuing capacity for change and adaptibility.

Bound up almost inextricably with Peak's developing attitudes socially are his relationships with women. These relationships are central to Peak's social aspirations and reflect in a primary way his development. The devotion of his mother and sister to their religion estranges Peak from the church. His aunt, Miss Cadman, and Lady Whitelaw make it possible for him to further his formal education. Sidwell Warricombe embodies Peak's ideal woman and, as a representative of her class, is the key to his social aspirations. Marcella Moxey represents not merely the emancipated woman but the very means by which Peak finally achieves financial independence. At every critical juncture in Peak's development there is a woman exercising power and influence. But the women do not really exist as individuals in their own right. They have existence only as Peak perceives them. Any changes which seem to occur are merely the result of Peak's changing perceptions. Such a representation is, of course, a virtue in a novel the chief object of which is to trace the development of an individual.

At the outset, Peak, not unlike many in his age, regards women as a species apart. Women are consigned generally to the merely social sphere of life and have no place in the consideration of the serious issues of existence. In addition to sharing this general prejudice of the age, Peak, more specifically because of his inherently solitary nature and devotion to study, eschews the company of women.

> As women again, he despised these relatives. It is almost impossible for a bright-witted lad in the lower middle class to escape this stage of development . . . . Godwin was one of those upon whose awakening intellect is forced a perception of the brain-defect so general in women when they are taught few of life's graces and none of its serious concerns,--their paltry prepossessions, their vulgar sequaciousness, their invincible ignorance, their absorption in a petty self . . . . Matrons and elderly unmarried women were truly the objects of his disdain; in them he saw nothing but their shortcomings.
> (I, 58)

It seems an easy enough step from this general attitude to the place where Peak is able to consign to the hell of his disdain his mother and his sister for their religious devotion, his aunt because she keeps a shop and Lady Whitelaw for being a plutocratic vulgarian.

There are other signs early enough, however, of another impulse in the young Peak. He is at times overcome with the perception of feminine beauty, and this perception raises many uncomfortable and irrational feelings. Unable to deal intellectually with these things, he is often plunged into despair (I, 58).

This admiration of feminine beauty soon localizes itself in Peak's idealization of the upper classes. At the Whitelaw College Convocation he notices two young ladies.

> On the seat behind him were two girls whose intermittent talk held him with irresistible charm throughout the whole ceremony. He had not imagined that girls could display such intelligence, and the sweetness of their intonation, the purity of their accent, the grace of their habitual phrases, were things altogether beyond his experience. This was not the English he had been wont to hear on female lips. His mother and his aunt spoke with propriety; their associates were soft-tongued; but here was something quite different from inoffensiveness of tone and diction. Godwin appreciated the differentiating cause. The young ladies behind him had been trained from the cradle to speak for the delight of fastidious ears; that they should be grammatical was not enough--they must excel in the art of conversational music. Of course there existed a world where only such speech was interchanged, and how inestimably happy those men to whom the sphere was native!
>
> (I, 82-3)

It is a small move from this kind of idealization to Peak's later declaration to Earwaker that marriage to an upper class woman is the means whereby he might secure a place more congenial to his own social proclivities. His one aim, he tells Earwaker, is to marry "a perfectly refined woman," one who might require some training to be led to his manner of thinking but one who has "'always lived among people of breeding and high education, and never had her thoughts soiled with the vile contact of poverty'" (I, 224). Peak's position has shifted here significantly from his earlier propensity to misogyny, although he clearly retains his inclination to see types rather than individuals. The shift has obviously been motivated by his desire to obtain social respectability.

It is clear from the relationship that he has with the Warricombe sisters and Sylvia Moorhouse that his ideal woman may be embodied in any one of several different people. As the type of upper class woman, any of the three would be functional in securing Peak's design. In the light of later events it seems ironic that Peak did not at this stage seize upon the design of a suit for Miss Moorhouse's hand in marriage. At the end of the novel it is Sylvia who has all of Sidwell's social respectability without any of the crippling social and religious ties which bind Sidwell to her familial duty; and it is Sylvia who has been emancipated like Marcella Moxey, but without Marcella's almost total denial of her femininity.

Sidwell Warricombe is presented initially as simply the younger sister of one of Peak's friends. Although she seems friendly enough, Peak characteristically finds it very difficult to exchange social pleasantries with her. Later in the novel, Peak seeks Sidwell in Exeter cathedral. The light filtering through the cathedral windows which surrounds Sidwell and the association of her with St. Sidwell fixes her religious orthodoxy in Peak's mind. The further identification of her as a worshipper of nature (II, 57) who is oppressed by all that the city of London represents, industrially, climatically, and socially (II, 244) shows her to be the embodiment of Peak's ideal. In his perception of her, she is the flower of womanhood, a point further emphasized by the sweet-briar which she wears at her waist (II, 87).

> Then was Sidwell's image glorified, and all the delights promised by such love as hers fired his imagination to intolerable ecstasy. O heaven! to see the smile softened by rosy warmth which would confess that she had given her heart--to feel her supple fingers intertwined with his that clasped them--to hear the words in which a mind so admirable, instincts so delicate, would make expression of their tenderness! To live with Sidwell--to breathe the fragrance of that flower of womanhood in wedded intimacy--to prove the devotion of a nature so profoundly chaste!
>
> (II, 114-15)

Accordingly, Peak pays court to her as the example of the type of woman who will so obviously confer on him the social respectability which he desperately seeks.

The measure of Peak's capacity for development in this case is indicated by his shift from regarding Sidwell as merely a type of desirable woman to the one woman he loves.

> It was Sidwell or death. Into what void of hideous futility would his life be cast, if this desire proved vain, and he were left to combat alone with the memory of his dishonour! With Sidwell the reproach could be outlived. She would understand him, pardon him--and thereafter a glorified existence, rivalling that of whosoever has been the most exultant among the sons of men!
>
> (II, 158-59)

Furthermore, if Sidwell remained throughout merely a type of desirable woman rather than the individual whom Peak now perceives, he might have taken his suit elsewhere after

Marcella's bequest makes him financially independent. The fact that he renews his suit of her in the face of considerable opprobrium suggests the change in his perception of her and the strength of his convictions. That the suit is not successful, that Sidwell succumbs to the forces of her environment--in this case familial pressures--and declines all further intercourse with Peak in no way mitigates Peak's obviously changed and changing perceptions.

His perception of Marcella Moxey undergoes a similar if somewhat less dramatic change. As in the case of Sidwell, at the outset she is merely the sister of a friend. As he comes to have more intimate contact with her, she becomes for him a type of the emancipated female. Marcella, as her name suggests, is a heretic not only in the sense of religious orthodoxy but in the social and intellectual senses as well. Marcella shares Peak's view of the typical female mind, but she is the personification of what is possible for women if they are set free in the same way as men to develop their minds rather than having them channeled in the usual pre-determined social moulds. But for all his protestations about the waste of the female intellect, Peak does not really care for Marcella (I, 190). Marcella, like the French sisters (In The Year of Jubilee) and Rhoda Nunn (The Odd Women), has paid for her intellectual emancipation with her femininity. Nevertheless, Peak's treatment of Marcella, in view of her obvious feeling for him, is little short of reprehensible.

But there is an indication that Peak is capable of a finer feeling for Marcella, even if he cannot love her as a woman. He is touched by her efforts to find him after his departure from London, and he is appreciative of her gesture to him of financial independence. Something of the depth of this feeling is brought out in the conversation with Earwaker just prior to Peak's departure for the continent.

> " . . . I wish it were possible for me to pray for the soul of that poor dead woman. I don't speak to you of her; but do you imagine I am brutally forgetful of her to whom I owe all this?"
> "I do you justice," returned the other, quietly. "I believe you can and do."
> (III, 231-32)

There is throughout a sense of repressed feeling, a depth of emotion predicated on something more than merely pecuniary considerations.

In these crucial relationships with women, much of the essential Peak emerges: his tendency to type people rather than to see them as individuals; his rationalizations as he attempts to justify to himself his pragmatic approach to life; and, above all, the sense of an individual who is open to change and development.

Despite Margaret Maison's assertion to the contrary,[20] the crisis of the spirit in Born in Exile is of considerable significance. Peak's struggle to order his life on a totally rational, intellectual basis necessarily includes his attempt to free himself from the influence of what he regards as the superstitious and dangerous nonsense of organized religion. Since organized religion has traditionally served as the base for moral conduct, Peak's struggle can be seen, as Jacob Korg points out,[21] as not only an effort to test the existing code to determine whether or not the code can be violated with impunity, but as an effort to determine whether it has any validity at all. To the extent that Peak's struggle constitutes a questioning of the sacrosanct values of society, the questions posed by the novel are of considerable import.

Peak's religious affiliation seems to be conventional low church Anglicanism which, because of his geologic studies, quickly becomes in the observance a burden hardly to be endured.

> As a matter of course the boys accompanied their mother each Sunday morning to the parish church, and this ceremony was becoming an insufferable tax on Godwin's patience. It was not only that he hated the name of religion, and scorned with much fierceness all who came in sympathetic contact therewith; the loss of time seemed to him an oppressive injury, especially now that he began to suffer from restricted leisure. He would not refuse to obey his mother's wish, but the sullenness of his Sabbatic demeanour made the whole family uncomfortable. As often as possible he feigned illness.
>
> (I, 66)

With this as background, it is hardly surprising that the differences in religious attitude initiate the estrangement of Peak from his mother and sister. Furthermore, Peak's conviction of the supremacy of the rational, scientific mind results in his condemnation of society as a whole, which is still, as the public reaction to the appearance of Professor Walsh at the Whitelaw convocation attests, bound to its religious heritage. Peak's bias against orthodox religion is confirmed by a sudden conviction which seizes him as he examines a rock quarry (I, 97). Against the sweep of geologic time, man's metaphysical speculations seem to Peak to be childish trivia.

This is not to suggest that life for Peak does not have its share of the mysterious or the irrational. In addition to the conviction gained in the rock quarry, Peak on two occasions--his announcement to Buckland Warricombe that he intends to study for holy orders (I, 279), and his declaration to Christian Moxey that he will not accept Marcella's bequest (III, 213)--speaks quite involuntarily. But such rare phenomena are generally given a rational explanation later.

Having eschewed the absolutes of religious faith, Peak holds that all knowledge is relative and must therefore be considered without the tripe that seems concomitant with a metaphysical context. In a philosophic sense, the best that man can reasonably hope to achieve is summed up in the Benthamite goals of the achievement of happiness and avoidance of pain. In the pursuit of such goals, it follows that with changing circumstances the methods of achieving those goals must also change, otherwise the pursuit is doomed to failure.

It follows from this that there can be no absolute base for moral conduct. This is not to suggest that there is no morality, only that what is moral changes according to changing conditions, as Peak explains to Earwaker and Malkin (II, 16ff.). Thus Peak comes to feel sure that philosophy--at least in the purely abstract sense--has nothing to do with the conduct of life.

Peak's own conduct appears to be scrupulously honest, and judged by his standards, moral. Peak's moral integrity is established early in the novel in the examination paper episode (I, 54-5), and is later confirmed in his dealings with Marcella and Sidwell. Paradoxically, however, Peak's honesty of goal involves the practice of hypocrisy as he pursues his goal. While Peak is able to convince himself that his hypocrisy is the only available means to achieve his end, others, especially in view of Peak's social pretensions, see it as little more than vulgar opportunism.

It is obvious that what Korg calls Peak's moral nihilism[22] places all sense of moral responsibility on the individual evaluation of experience. This is enough in itself to alienate Peak not only from society as a whole, but also from his otherwise politically and intellectually radical friends. Peak is aware of his increasingly isolated situation and time and again finds it necessary to justify his actions to himself, as he tries to do in thinking about the effect of his calculated hypocrisy on Martin Warricombe, Sidwell's father.

> He was convinced that no mortal could suffer harm, even if he accomplished the uttermost of his desires. Whom was he in danger of wronging? The conventional moralist would cry: Everyone with whom he came in the slightest contact! But such a mind as Peak's has very little to do with conventional morality. Injury to himself he foresaw and accepted; he could never be the man nature had designed in him; and he must frequently submit to a self-contempt which would be very hard to bear. Those whom he consistently deceived, how would they suffer? Martin Warricombe to begin with. Martin was a man who had lived his life, and whose chief care would now be to keep his mind at rest in the faiths which had served him from youth onwards. In that very purpose, Godwin believed he could assist him. To see a young man, of strong and trained intellect, championing the old beliefs, must doubtless be a source of reassurance to one in Martin's position. Reassurance derived from a lie?--And what matter, if the outcome were genuine, if it lasted until the man himself was no more? Did not every form of content result from illusion? What was truth without the mind of the believer?
>
> (II, 61-2)

In his own mind he has been able to convince himself through sophistical means that what others would consider to be morally wrong is, in fact, a kindness to a man who persists in taking comfort from illusions. Peak's moral development from orthodoxy to heterodoxy is shown nicely in the contrast between his intense reaction to his having to bow to necessity in the interview with Lady Whitelaw (I, 154ff.) and the calm boredom with which he pursues his goal in the interview with Mrs. Warricombe (II, 274).

Like Sue Bridehead and Jude Fawley in Hardy's Jude The Obscure, Peak is a man who seems to be in advance of his time. As they do, he views with disgust the hypocrisy manifested by a society which preaches a noble ideal but which, at the same time, shows by what it practises that that ideal is merely an illusion to which all are content to pay lip service. Like them, too, he discovers the ostracism that awaits those who attempt to set their own course of life and conduct. However, unlike Hardy's characters, Peak is also capable of foolishly believing that others see his actions as he does. Peak is thereby more complex: he is essentially a noble person who uses ignoble means to secure his ends; he is a man who decries the hypocrisy of society and yet is himself a hypocrite in the methods he employs; in his beliefs he is at once martyr and fool. The exposition of this complex personality dominates the novel from first to last.

For almost the first time in his novelistic career, Gissing in Born in Exile has his secondary characters well under control. Each plays a role according to his relationship to Peak, and as a consequence the reader sees these characters as they relate to the central figure. Gissing has been criticized by one student, R. L. Selig, concerning the figures of Earwaker, Moxey and Malkin in that he seems to use them too mechanically. The appearance of these characters in the first two chapters of sections II, III, IV and V is too obviously designed to lend symmetry to the narrative, it is claimed. Furthermore, the only significant contribution which they make to the action is that they help Marcella Moxey in the uncovering of Peak's scheme. Altogether, Selig claims, they are little more than three clowns who might well have been omitted from the novel.[23]

Such a view as this one tends to reflect more the pitfalls of insensitive reading than it does any insight to the novel. If any of the three characters can be termed a clown, it is Malkin. Indeed, as his very name suggests, he is a clown, or more properly an effigy or scarecrow of a man whose quixotic pursuit of Mrs. Jacox and her daughters across Europe seems to be a comic counterpart to the more serious efforts of Peak to secure his future by his pursuit of the Warricombe family respectability. Far from being a clown, Earwaker's distinct lack of social pretensions, his rational control of a life dedicated to political and social idealism, and his gaining of a place in society without becoming its slave, suggest that he is the kind of man Peak might have become had it not been for his hypersensitive nature. Finally, of the three characters cited, it is Christian Moxey whose career most closely parallels that of Peak. As his name suggests, he, too, has his ideals, or in his case ideal, embodied in the form of the ironically named Constance. It is for her that Moxey has a love and devotion which can remain unsullied over the many years of waiting for a hated husband to die. But it is also Moxey who must learn to accommodate himself to social reality when he discovers that the devotion is all on his side, that the "hated" husband has really had a place in Constance's heart, and that the secret affair with Moxey has only been a means of titillation for her. In remarking ruefully on his career and Peak's, Moxey says:

> "Do you recollect, Peak," said Christian presently, "the talk we had in the fields of Twybridge, when we first met?" . . . . If only my words then had had any weight with you! And if only I had acted upon my own advice! Just for those few weeks I was sane; I understood something of life; I saw my true way before me. You and I have both gone after ruinous ideals, instead of taking the solid good held out to us . . . ."
> (III, 216)

It is the other secondary figures, such as Bruno Chilvers and Buckland Warricombe, who establish much of the novel's satiric humour. Chilvers is the socially oriented clergyman who, despite his rhetoric, is the personified religious hypocrisy which dominates the age depicted in the novel. Warricombe seems to be little more than Chilvers' secular counterpart, but the importance of these figures lies in the fact that the social approbation which they receive for their "fortune hunting" is a mordant contrast to the social opprobrium that Peak receives for the same thing (III, 228-29).

It is only just to conclude from the evidence that Gissing has truly subordinated his secondary characters so as to employ them in the most effective way. By means of his usual practice of parallelism and contrast in their external actions with those of the central figure, he manages to sharpen the focus on Peak. Here there is none of the fatal diffusion of interest which weakens The Odd Women. Here there is no sense of the secondary and even tertiary characters usurping the role of the central character. Instead, there is the carefully executed consideration of the career of an hypersensitive individual who occupies the reader's interest, and in this the tightly handled careers of the minor characters play an important role.

Dostoievski's Crime and Punishment, Turgenev's Fathers and Sons, Bourget's Le Disciple and Un Crime D'Amour, Jacobsen's Niels Lyhne and even Mrs. Humphry Ward's Robert Elsmere have been noted by critics, such as Jacob Korg, as possible influences on Born in Exile.[24] Yet it is difficult to see how such diverse novels as these could have influenced Gissing's novel in any direct and specific way. The chief figures in the novels of Jacobsen and Ward are men who undergo spiritual crises over their loss of orthodox religious faith; the main figures in Bourget's novels are clever young men who deliberately and calculatedly pursue courses which flaunt the usual dictates of morality; and the heroes of the Russian novels are often well-educated young men, who, like Turgenev's Bazarov, feel themselves to be in advance of traditional beliefs and try to conduct their lives using more "scientific" criteria as a base. But of all these novels only Crime and Punishment has any number of suggestive parallels,[25] and at that Born in Exile has nothing to match the nightmare of the spirit rendered by the Russian. In any case, as Walter Neuschaffer points out, the alleged influence of Dostoievski on Gissing might well have derived from English sources.[26] As Dorothy Brewster suggests:

> One can only conclude that Gissing was variously influenced. It is easy to commit the reductive fallacy of assigning to one cause a phenomenon only to be explained by the interaction of many. Resemblances may arise as the effect of similar causes, and not from imitation. What looks like an influence may be a parallel or a coincidence. Once an influence has affected one writer, it may affect others through him. The literary family tree branches out.[27]

And, with regard to the influence of these novels on Gissing, Korg seems to concur with Brewster when he writes:

> Whether or not any of these novels influenced Born in Exile directly, they show that in Godwin Peak Gissing was dealing with a characteristic figure and a characteristic problem of nineteenth-century civilization. All over Europe young men were making an ideal of science, and the fictional record of this development shows how their contempt for feelings resulted in a stifling of their own emotional capacities; what began as an exile from environment ended as an exile from the self. The individual became an amoral desperado, committing some affront to society that aroused in him feelings of guilt and remorse he had hitherto suppressed, and these feelings forced him to recognize the inadequacy of the scientific ideal.[28]

Whatever the value of this as an account of such figures as Raskalnikov, Elsmere and Bazarov the important point, surely, is that Gissing and a number of other writers of his time may have shared a common reaction to their age; they may have shared the feeling that this reaction demanded a novelistic response; they may even have been in general agreement about the nature of the novelistic response, but more specific than this about direct literary influences it is difficult to be.

In his depiction of the interior landscape of the mind of the sensitive individual, Gissing's chief weakness is an inability to move successfully from the older conventions of the English novel, practised at such expense in the novels of the first phase, to the more dramatic mode of presentation, which, as he himself wrote, he felt was more artistic.[29] Some sections of Born in Exile, such as Peak's rehearsal of what he might have said to Lady Whitelaw (I, 154), are startling in their modernity. The reader is taken inside Peak's mind to perceive the world as he perceives it, to watch the twistings and turnings of the rationalizing mind. Such rationalizations throughout the novel provide this drama of the personality.

Such examples as this are not, strictly speaking, stream of consciousness, as one student, Judith Walzer, has suggested.[30] They are, rather, attempts--successful attempts for the most part--at what Robert Humphrey calls interior monologue.[31] In these passages there is no sense of the merely random perceptions of the external world impinging themselves on the consciousness of the individual. Rather, they depict the human mind as it orders those perceptions of the external world and as it formulates a mode of conduct which seems rational, given the ordering process. Furthermore, from another point of view, such passages do not seem to be deep enough to qualify as stream of consciousness, as M. C. Donnelly points out.[32] Gissing was not experimental enough to pursue to its ultimate a technique which the greater writers who followed him made their own. He was, on the other hand, experimental enough to try to capture the drama of the ratiocinative mind from the inside, and in a number of instances he is satisfyingly successful.

But, coupled with such convincing passages depicting the drama of the rationalizing mind, there are lengthy passages of narrative summary and commentary. The whole of the second chapter of the first volume is devoted to the history of the Peak family, presumably to provide the social environment or background against which Peak's attitude and behaviour are to be judged. In addition, there are passages which qualify as interior monologue into which the narrator intrudes his commentary. While this sort of distancing provides a context by which many of Peak's thoughts and actions can be appreciated for the irony that they provide, it also means that there is some diffusion of intensity, and in a novel of this kind intensity has to be maintained for full effect. Gissing's novel can best be described as an amalgam of the older mode and the newer. Because sustained intensity is so necessary for the success of such a novel as this, the amalgam is not an altogether successful one.

Second, the depiction of the class into which Peak desires to move lacks the solidity and conviction of the depiction of the class from which he seeks to escape. .The perception of the Warricombe estate (I, 232-33) is clearly an idealization on Peak's part, and, as has been amply demonstrated to this point in the novel, Peak's perceptions of people and things are severely limited by what he wants to see. With respect to the upper class mode of existence, then, the reader is limited to what Peak sees. The social context of Peak's background is conveyed by the objective narrator, so this particular problem does not occur there. It would seem, then, that from first phase novels to second phase novels Gissing swung from one extreme to another with respect to the function of his narrator. From a narrator who continually intrudes himself into the action and who is responsible for the objectively created environment, Gissing moved to a narrator who sometimes intrudes himself into the action, but who sometimes--at the most crucial junctures it would seem--disappears altogether. As with the function of the narrators, so with the depiction of the social scene Gissing swung from one extreme to another. From the depiction of characters as products of their environment in the novels of the first phase, Gissing moved in the novels of the second phase to the depiction of an individual without an environment. In both cases--that of the creation of the environment and the function of the narrator--it is in the novels of the third phase that Gissing achieved the synthesis that makes for satisfying art.

Despite these shortcomings, this is an impressive novel. The novel which, he told his friend Bertz, he had to write,[33] Born in Exile represents the summit of Gissing's achievement in the depiction of the individual sensibility. In addition to the perspicuity with which he depicts the inner life of the central figure, the novel represents an important and significant step in the writer's attempt to discover the appropriate structure to embody his vision of life.

Chapter IV

Phase The Third

1. Novels of Fulfillment

In chronological terms the third phase of George Gissing's career as a novelist began with the publication of *New Grub Street* in 1891. That he should have written a novel as accomplished as this and then gone on to write such obviously flawed works as *The Odd Women* and *In The Year of Jubilee* is at first glance somewhat puzzling. This inconsistency can be partially explained perhaps by noting that the differences between the second and third phases of his career are more obviously those of degree rather than of kind. That Gissing could regress to write both flawed works and works of an earlier mode is undoubtedly true, as M. C. Donnelly notes.[1] That he was also slow to adapt to new notions about the right design for his novels, or even how they should be published, has also been well documented.[2] Gissing was a writer, who, while constantly alive to new ideas about fiction, took a long time to make any part of the new his own. He continually progressed by trial and error, sometimes scoring a brilliant hit, more often failing to hit the mark. It is a debatable point in any event whether any artist's development takes place according to a rigidly determined linear scheme. Virginia Woolf, a greater technician in the novel form than Gissing, wrote a radically experimental novel entitled The Waves. Shortly thereafter she wrote a quite conventional novel entitled The Years. Examples of this kind of regression might well be multiplied from the careers of other writers.

The novels of the third phase of Gissing's career, particularly New Grub Street and The Whirlpool, are those in which the various structural elements are handled in such a manner that the novels achieve maximum impact. In truth it can be said that after a decade and more of writing novels, Gissing had finally, after trial and error, painfully achieved an excellence in the structural aspects of his novels which is not only pleasing in an aesthetic sense but which because of its nature conveys his powerful and in many respects unique vision unimpaired and with an almost unremitting intensity. These novels can therefore be judged not only on the basis of the strength of their ideas, but also on the basis of the handling of the elements which give these ideas form. The technical competence of these novels will sustain the most rigorous analysis.

With only two possible exceptions--Mrs. Morton (The Whirlpool) and Irene Derwent (The Crown of Life)--Gissing's female characters of this phase have warmth and vitality without idealization and vices without total villainy. In a portrait gallery which includes such figures as Amy

Reardon and Marian Yule (New Grub Street), Alma Rolfe and Sibyl Carnaby (The Whirlpool), Constance Bride and May Tomlin (Our Friend The Charlatan), and Bertha Cross (Will Warburton), Gissing created some of his finest and most convincingly drawn characters.[3] In these portraits there is none of the sentimental idealizing that characterizes those of Helen Norman, Ida Starr, Thyrza Trent, and Adela Waltham, although each has her share of virtue, such as Sibyl Carnaby's loyalty, and Constance Bride's sharp intellect. Each character has her shortcomings as well, such as Alma Rolfe's insatiable need for adulation no matter what the source of it may be, and Marian Yule's clearsighted assessment of the weaknesses of others, including those of Jasper Milvain, which effectively dooms her to a life as a literary hack, researching and sometimes ghost-writing material for her embittered father. Such a judicious balance of virtue and vice in nearly every case argues for complex and credible characterization.

These novels have an equally memorable gallery of male figures from Edwin Reardon and Jasper Milvain (New Grub Street), through Harvey Rolfe (The Whirlpool), to Will Warburton and Norbert Franks (Will Warburton). In these novels, even for those who have been thought to be fictive versions of Gissing, such as Rolfe, Reardon and Warburton, there is none of the special pleading by the narrator for sympathy from the reader that marks the earlier novels. The essential humanity of each, complete with its strengths and weaknesses, is allowed to stand on its own. As in the characterizations of the women, there is an almost too careful balancing of the virtues and vices. Virtues, such as Reardon's refusing to regard literature as merely a marketable commodity such as it has become for some, are carefully set against the vices, such as his own recognition that he is the chief architect of the destruction of his marriage and yet he watches it disintegrate. Harvey Rolfe's quiet aloofness from the whirlpool of modern life is set against his strange lassitude as he watches his too susceptible wife succumb to the forces of the vortex and be swallowed up by it. Even those like Lee Hannaford (The Crown of Life) and Norbert Franks, who, in many an earlier novel would have been merely caricatured, are depicted as having more than one facet to their personalities. Even in these cases there is, as Donnelly notes, an obvious attempt to understand rather than simply to condemn.[4] A mellowing attitude toward life and a mature literary talent combine in these novels to create characters that are the fruition of a life's work.

In the creation of these finely drawn characters, the lengthy introductory biographies of earlier and less accomplished novels have been much reduced in number and nature. The characters are quickly set in motion and their essential qualities are revealed dramatically through their thoughts and inter-actions with others. The counterpointing technique--that of pairing figures for the sake of comparison and contrast--is used to good effect. In New Grub Street there is a clear counterpointing of the personalities of Milvain and Reardon--the cheerful and somewhat bemused opportunism of the one contrasting sharply with the gloomy, debilitating mental agony of the other. The same technique illustrates Amy Reardon's flighty, but amiable sociability, which degenerates into a spirit-desolating whine under adverse circumstances, in contrast to Marian Yule's more solemn, self-righteous dedication to duty. But this is no mere acrobatic display of technical competence in a literary balancing act. Other characters, such as Whelpdale and Yule, properly subordinated, involved in varying degrees with the world of publishing, are introduced to throw into even more sharp relief the issues and personalities of the major figures. The same technique is employed in other novels, such as The Whirlpool, where varying degrees of similarity exist between the situation of Harvey Rolfe and those of Buncombe, his London landlord, Hugh Carnaby, his best friend and Cecil Morphew, to whom Harvey is at once advisor and father figure. In these novels, as in those of the second phase, Gissing demonstrates his competence in using this counterpointing technique in order to intensify the effect rather than diffusing it, as Henry James has charged.[5]

In the same way that he learned the art of proportion and subordination in character creation, Gissing demonstrates in the novels of the third phase that he has learned to handle narrative. In this phase there is no sense of a series of narrative threads, each equally important in demonstrating some idea. Nor is there an intense focus on the sensibility of one character to the exclusion of other important elements, elements which are necessary to an understanding of the novel. Instead, Gissing shows his characters as they react in terms of internal process and as they respond to the external stimuli of an objectively created and carefully sustained environment. Character change is dramatically wrought by the combination of inner psychological process and the effects of the environment. By dramatizing character change in this way, Gissing combined the chief strengths of the first two phases of his career. The combination allows the drama of the individual sensibility, while, at the same time, it renders that drama occurring in an objectively rendered environment. Few critics have unbridled admiration for The Crown of Life, but, in fact, the novel is stronger and more competent than some critics, notably Korg and Donnelly, are prepared to admit.[6] The novel does manifest a number of the virtues of the novels of the last phase.

Piers Otway, the illegitimate son of Jerome Otway, is depicted at the outset as a book-bound dreamer. He is studying hard to pass a civil service examination, and he is pursuing in a desultory way the dream of finding the ideal woman. His search for the ideal woman exists at first only as idle daydreams occasioned by photos in a London shop window. Eventually, these dreams assume corporeal reality in the person of Irene Derwent, cousin of Olga Hannaford, in whose home Piers is a boarder. Even when his dream has corporeal substance, Piers tends to idealize Irene to the extent that she seems to have few human attributes. That this is merely dreamy idealization is made clear by Irene's all too human exasperation in reaction to Piers' faux pas in appearing drunk, in the company of disreputable persons, at a social function. As a direct result of Irene's disapproval and the shame he feels, Piers abandons his dream of becoming a civil servant and decides he has forfeited any chance to win Irene's love as well. He thus decides to go off to Russia to become an agent for an English importing company.

As Piers becomes more practical with respect to the conduct of everyday life, so he also learns about love and marriage. He can observe at first hand the lifetime his father has spent in trying to find his own ideal woman. He can observe the bitterness of the Hannaford marriage, a bitterness that leaves Mrs. Hannaford so distraught that she leaves her husband. And there is the marriage of Olga to Florio, the Italian, which so embitters Olga that rather melodramatically she tries to poison the developing relationship between Piers and Irene. On the other hand, Piers can also observe that, after a lifetime's search, his father did find the ideal woman for him, and he can observe the happiness of his brother Alexander and his wife and that of Dr. Derwent. It becomes clear through these examples to Piers that love based on nothing more than dreamy ideals is not only foolhardy, it is dangerous. Alternatively, marriage based on mere cold rationality is marriage without love. It is in the light of this knowledge that Piers and Irene move closer to an understanding about love, marriage and each other.

Through this combination of inner psychological process and objectively created and carefully sustained external environment, Gissing shows Piers' character development. A comparison of the rather idle, dreaming figure of the novel's opening scene with the more practical and level-headed individual who talks with his brother Daniel in a later scene makes obvious Piers' developing maturity.[7] It also makes obvious Gissing's modification of his almost exclusive concentration on the psychological processes which marks the novels of the second phase.

As Gissing learned the arts of foreshortening, subordination, and proportion in character creation, so he also learned to handle narrative more effectively. With the focus fixed more intensively on the central figures, Gissing devotes more effort to the exposition of their narratives. The technique of counterpoint in narrative lines is used to good effect. In Will Warburton, in the novel of the same name, Gissing presents first of all the case of a man, who, because of the perfidy of his business partner, finds that he must descend in social rank to the level of a greengrocer in order to continue his support of his widowed mother and his sister. As a consequence of his decision he loses his prospect of marrying the beautiful but socially conscious Rosamund Elvan. But the descent in rank reveals to Warburton who his real friends are. Thus the prospect of marriage to the more realistic Bertha Mason seems to be more than merely the conventional ending to a Victorian novel. It takes on the aspect of confirming the rightness of Warburton's changed perceptions of value. In contrast Gissing presents the case of Norbert Franks. Franks is at the outset an artist who has decided to convey his painful vision of the reality of life no matter what the cost. His depictions of the raw material of slum life find, however, no ready market, and Franks, no longer content with his _succès d'estime_, prostitutes his talent when he learns that there is a market for his exercises in the mode of decadent romanticism. At the end of the novel, Franks is a commercial success but the betrayal of his original idealism stands in marked contrast to Warburton's firmly established moral integrity. The lives of the two men are further linked by the presence of Rosamund and Bertha. As Bertha is first attracted to Franks and then marries Warburton, so Rosamund is first engaged to Warburton but later and more fittingly becomes enamored of Franks. Woven nicely into the pattern, but in properly subdued shades, are the careers of the less important figures such as Allchin, Warburton's assistant at Jollyman's, and Mrs. Warburton. Each of these figures finds too that life sometimes requires a realignment of values and that he is truly happy who can manage such a change without the sacrifice of his moral integrity.

A similarly competent handling of narrative line is evident in Our Friend The Charlatan, where Dyce Lashmar first woos Constance Bride, then May Tomlin, and then Iris Woolstan in an effort to marry a woman with substantial enough means to keep him in the kind of material comfort to which he has become accustomed. The fact that he is too clever by half and, having lost the opportunity to marry the woman who did get the fortune for which he was searching, winds up by marrying a woman who has lost the little bit of money he was sure she had, merely adds a final touch of Gissing-esque irony to a narrative which, although not so convoluted as some of the earlier narratives, is neatly and deftly handled.

In the novels of this phase, Gissing returned to a more conspicuous use of the dramatic, if not melodramatic, devices that often mark the novels of the first phase, and which are not so obvious in the novels of the second phase. A catastrophic fire and pitiable death in New Grub Street, manslaughter and suicide along with adultery in The Whirlpool, an attempt to prevent a marriage because of insane jealousy in The Crown of Life, and missing heirs as well as peculiar wills in The Town Traveller and Our Friend The Charlatan are a number of the devices used in these later novels which are reminiscent of the first phase novels. The difference between their use here and in the earlier novels is that the events now seem to be the results of the concatenation of character and event rather than merely the gratuitous tricks of a malevolent environment. Alma's suicide in The Whirlpool is carefully prepared for and, in the light of the deterioration of her personality, seems to be almost inevitable. It is doubtful that the same claim could be made for Arthur Golding's melodramatic suicide leap into Niagara Falls at the conclusion of Workers in the Dawn.

One of the most interesting features of the novels of this phase is the replacement of the narrator as editorial omniscience by the narrator as neutral omniscience. Although this replacement starts in the novels of the second phase, in this phase it is complete. One of the significant differences between the two phases is that in the novels of the second phase the narrator tends to disappear at critical junctures, whereas in the novels of the later phase the presence of the narrator is continually felt in the carefully sustained distance between reader and action. While the narrator here is not so conspicuously present as the narrator of the first phase novels, he is present to discharge his function at all times. It is, as already noted, as if Gissing, having swung from one extreme to another in the matter of function for his narrator, had finally arrived at what he considered to be a satisfactory synthesis which best suits his æsthetic purposes. The narrator of these novels speaks as a neutral observer, making no special pleas, but fully and objectively apprising the reader of character and situation. In the following passage, the narrator informs the reader about Mrs. Toplady, a middle-aged socialite from Our Friend The Charlatan.

> . . . Left to herself again, Mrs. Toplady took up the newspapers; thence she passed to the bulkier periodicals; lastly to literature in volume. Her manner of reading betokened the quick-witted woman who sees at a glance the thing that she cares for, and refuses to spend a moment on anything not immediately attractive. People marvelled at the extent of her acquaintance with current writing; in truth she never read a book, but skimmed the pages just sufficiently for her amusement and her social credit. In the world of laborious idleness, Mrs. Toplady had a repute for erudition; she was often spoken of as a studious and learned woman; and this estimate of herself she inclined to accept. Having daily opportunity of observing the fathomless ignorance of polite persons, she made it her pride to keep abreast with the day's culture. Genuine curiosity, too, supplied her with a motive, for she had a certain thin, supple, restless intelligence, which took wide surveys of superficial life, and was ever seeking matter for mirth or disdain in the doings of men.[8]

While Mrs. Toplady is not overtly condemned--indeed there is a certain grudging admiration for her quick wit and intelligence--the reader is made aware of the extent of her knowledge and social concern. Such passages as this, in combination with the scenes which dramatize very effectively the attributes of Mrs. Toplady, keep the reader fully cognizant of the character and her role. Similar passages and scenes involving other characters in this novel and the other novels of this phase demonstrate very well the firm control exercised by Gissing's narrator as neutral omniscience.

Gissing's narrator is a creator of environment not only in terms of the physical landscape and the various social conditions, but also with respect to the states of mind of the central figures. Although in this function the narrator's presence is a distancing device which tends to preclude the same degree of dramatic intensity which is characteristic of the interior monologues of Godwin Peak, it nevertheless provides a continuing objective presence by which character and action can be perceived and evaluated by the reader. That is, the reader is not confined almost exclusively to the single consciousness with its exacerbating struggles for self-fulfillment in the light of which the context is vague, ephemeral, or inaccurately perceived. In the novels of the third phase, the characters work out their problems in their own way--they have an independent life of their own--but they do this in a carefully sustained objective context. In this way, inaccurate perceptions of life by a character become immediately obvious. At one and the same time Gissing manages to preserve much of the dramatic intensity of the inner process and to render that struggle in a solidly realized context.

Not all the novels of this phase of Gissing's career are equally compelling either in terms of subject matter or technical virtuosity, although all are at least mechanically competent. Some otherwise sympathetic critics, such as Jacob Korg, confronted with the fact that Gissing's early novels are clearly flawed art, have tended to dismiss

Gissing as artist,[9] and have declared as inconsequential the novels of Gissing's later years.[10] M. C. Donnelly pays some deference to Gissing's art in a general sense, lumping The Town Traveller and Will Warburton together as "pleasant trivialities," but at the same time she does acknowledge their technical competence.[11] There are, however, two novels which amply demonstrate the maturation of Gissing the artist and which, it may be argued, are greater as novels than anything Gissing wrote in the eighties because the fulfillment of the potential of their form assures the impact of their informing ideas. New Grub Street and The Whirlpool bring to fruition Gissing's vision of the individual and society. At the same time, everything that he had ever striven to realize æsthetically in the novel form is achieved in these two fine novels.

2a. New Grub Street

From the time of its first publication in 1891 until the present day, New Grub Street has been the most universally acclaimed of Gissing's novels. An anonymous reviewer in the Whitehall Review of April 1891 calls it "Mr. Gissing's newest literary triumph," and suggests that this novel fulfills the literary promise so confidently predicted some years earlier.[12] Another contemporary review notes the novel's "relentless realism" and goes on to suggest that: "New Grub Street is, in short, a novel which many may fail to enjoy, but which few competent critics can fail to admire . . . ."[13] The generally laudatory comments from this period find their fullest expression in a New York review.

> New Grub Street has the . . . attraction . . . of painting to the life those mediocre figures who have figured so conspicuously in the literary life of Victorian London, especially during the last twenty years or so. Mr. Gissing has seen through his models with wonderful clearness. Their pettiness, their ignorance, their unspeakable pretence and vulgarity he has painted once and for all. Quite aside from its significance as a study of human nature pure and simple, this is a brilliant book.[14]

More recent critics, such as Q. D. Leavis and M. C. Donnelly, have been scarcely less laudatory, although their respective foci are less on the book's alleged fidelity to life--a continuing note in the reviews of Gissing's day--than they are on other criteria. For Leavis, New Grub Street is Gissing's only great novel and it is one of a select number of novels which provide a link between the great novels of the eighteenth century and those of the modern period.[15] In the context of remarks about the novel's technical competence, M. C. Donnelly says: "It is the one novel of Gissing which both his contemporaries and the 'new school' of critics today have found admirable."[16]

Yet in the midst of this nearly unanimous acclaim over some eight decades none has found it worthwhile to examine the novel on the basis of purely æsthetic criteria. One recent critic, Irving Howe, generally sympathetic to Gissing, suggests that to subject the novel to a "close reading" would be merely tiresome and not especially rewarding.[17] However, it is surely just because Gissing had finally found the appropriate vehicle and mastered its materials that the vision of the novel is as powerful and compelling as it is. It is only in the pursuit of a "close reading" that it becomes possible to appreciate the novel in the fullest measure.

Ostensibly, the novel focuses on the conditions social, personal, and professional of those who inhabit the 'Grub Street'--those who earn their livelihood by their pens--of Gissing's day. As a number of students and critics, such as R. L. Selig and P. J. Keating, have shown, New Grub Street presents three 'classes' in the literary world which it examines: the journalists, the belletrists, and the novelists.[18] It is in the examination of the relationships among these 'classes' and among the individuals within these groups that the essential vision of the novel is conveyed. Essentially what is conveyed is a vision of a world of traditional values--in this case the world of literary endeavour--being inundated by the crass commercialism of an increasingly vulgar age, and of the lives of the individuals who are so obviously affected by the changes being wrought in the process.

Among the journalists, Jasper Milvain is clearly the dominant figure in the novel. At the outset, Milvain seems to be little more than a clever but pretentious young man, who, after an early career of living on his mother's largesse and dabbling in the world of literary endeavour, has no real prospects in life, a fact of which he is reminded by his sister Maud.

> "I want you to tell me something, Jasper. How much longer shall you look to mother for support? I mean it literally; let me have an idea of how much longer it will be."
>
> He looked away and reflected.
>
> "To leave a margin," was his reply, "let us say twelve months."
>
> "Better say your favourite 'ten years' at once."
>
> "No. I speak by the card. In twelve months' time, if not before, I shall begin to pay my debts. My dear girl, I have the honour to be a tolerably long-headed individual. I know what I'm about."
>
> "And let us suppose mother were to die within a year?"
>
> "I should make shift to do very well."
>
> "You? And please--what of Dora and me?"
>
> "You should write Sunday-school prizes."
>
> Maud turned away and left him.[19]

Yet it is to Milvain's credit and an awakened sense of filial duty that, after he is apprised of his mother's increasingly precarious financial condition, he sets out to make a place for himself in the literary world. Whatever other faults he may show at this stage, Milvain has no delusions about his own talents and of what it takes to succeed as a literary man in these days. With what is shown to be characteristic perspicacity he distinguishes between himself and his friend Reardon and their respective responses to the demands of modern 'Grub Street.'

> "But just understand the difference between a man like Reardon and a man like me. He is the old type of unpractical artist; I am the literary man of 1882. He won't make concessions, or rather, he can't make them; he can't supply the market. I--well, you may say that at present I do nothing; but that's a great mistake, I am learning my business. Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who may succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skilful tradesman. He thinks first and foremost of the markets; when one kind of goods begins to go off slackly, he is ready with something new and appetising. He knows perfectly all the possible sources of income. Whatever he has to sell he'll get payment for it from all sorts of various quarters; none of your unpractical selling for a lump sum to a middleman who will make six distinct profits. Now look you: if I had been in Reardon's place, I'd have made four hundred at least out of "The Optimist"; I should have gone shrewdly to work with magazines and newspapers and foreign publishers, and--all sorts of people. Reardon can't do that kind of thing, he's behind his age; he sells a manuscript as if he lived in Sam Johnson's Grub Street. But our Grub Street of to-day is quite a different place: it is supplied with telegraphic communication, it knows what literary fare is in demand in every part of the world, its inhabitants are men of business, however seedy."
>
> (4-5)

With such acuity, Milvain sets out to make a place for himself in, if not to conquer altogether, modern Grub Street. With the single-mindedness of purpose that it takes to succeed, and, using the principles he outlines to Marian Yule in their meeting in Wattleborough (22ff.) and later in London (101ff.), Milvain aligns himself with the unsavoury Clement Fadge and begins his career as a journalist in earnest. A later account of one of his working days to his sisters and Marian Yule reveals how cleverly Milvain is taking advantage of current market conditions, Jasper's own candid evaluation of the material he is producing, and, even more ominously, the forces loose in society which make such literary production so profitable.

> " . . . I got up at 7:30, and whilst I breakfasted I read through a volume I had to review. By 10:30 the review was written--three-quarters of a column of the *Evening Budget*. . . . Well, from 10:30 to 11 I smoked a cigar and reflected, feeling the day wasn't badly begun. At eleven I was ready to write my Saturday *causerie* for the *Will o' the Wisp*; it took me till close upon one o'clock, which was rather too long. I can't afford more than an hour and a half for that job. At one, I rushed out to a dirty eating-house in Hampstead Road. Was back again by a quarter to two, having in the meantime sketched a paper for *The West End*. Pipe in mouth, I sat down to leisurely artistic work; by five, half the paper was done; the other half remains for to-morrow. From five to half-past I read four newspapers and two magazines, and from half-past to a quarter to six I jotted down several ideas that had come to me whilst reading. At six I was again in the dirty eating-house, satisfying a ferocious hunger. Home once more at 6:45, and for two hours wrote steadily at a long affair I have in hand for *The Current*. Then I came here, thinking hard all the way. What say you to this? Have I

> earned a night's repose?
> "And what's the value of it all?" asked Maud.
> "Probably from ten to twelve guineas, if I calculated."
> "I meant, what was the literary value of it?" said his sister, with a smile.
> "Equal to that of the contents of a mouldy nut."
>
> (162-63)

It is the profit to be derived from such conditions that is Milvain's principal concern. In his view of poverty and its attendant evils, and the power of money, he anticipates by more than a decade the comments of Shaw's Undershaft in Major Barbara.

The pursuit of money and the social respectability that goes with it leads Milvain ultimately to replace the detested Fadge in the editorial chair of The Current, and to replace the doomed Reardon in marriage to Amy Reardon (466ff.). But Milvain's pursuit of these goals exacts its price on him as a human being. Professionally, he is prepared, as he admits himself, to use anyone, even Clement Fadge (97), to achieve his ends, although his association with Fadge costs him Alfred Yule's esteem. He finds it easy in this context to review books to suit the pre-determined disposition of any periodical, to regulate his perambulations to promote the social contacts that he recognizes are so necessary for success in modern 'Grub Street', and he becomes utterly ruthless in his dealings with others, even at the possible risk of his sister's happiness, as Dolomore finds out to his financial sorrow (425). The view that emerges is that of a man who is clever and who learns to manipulate the people and circumstances in which he finds himself for his own professional and financial advantage. He is a man, ultimately, to whom financial security and social respectability become the sole criteria of success.

Much of Milvain's professional pragmatism becomes operative in his personal life as well. At first, Milvain is genuinely concerned about his mother's financial situation, especially about the part he is playing in putting an unseemly stress on her relatively meagre income. Forced to make his own way, Milvain soon acquires most of the attributes of an atavistic business world. His early encouragement of his sisters' efforts to write for juvenile audiences and his concern for their welfare are in sharp contrast to his later willingness to sacrifice Maud's happiness unless her fiancé can satisfy Milvain's standards of fiscal and social respectability. His apparent gloating over Maud's rumoured marital problems (464) and his bullying of Dora to accept social calls from Amy Reardon, a woman Dora detests (465), help to underline the deleterious effect that 'Grub Street' has had on Milvain's personality.

But it is in his treatment of Marian Yule that Milvain appears at his shoddy worst. He is interested in Marian initially only as the daughter of a well known literary figure, Alfred Yule. But with a growing sexual attraction and little else to recommend such a tie, Milvain labels Marian "dangerous" to his future plans (38). Marian's attractiveness for whatever purpose is greatly enhanced when Milvain learns that she is to be a major beneficiary of her uncle's will. Playing on Marian's obviously desperate need for male attention, Milvain develops the relationship to the point where he proposes marriage and she accepts (301). Then, when in a typically Gissing-esque twist of fate it seems clear that Marian's inheritance is to be tied up in a legal wrangle, the problem for Milvain is how to end a relationship which he now views as entrapment (442). His situation is further complicated when it becomes known that he has also proposed to a rich spinster, Miss Rupert (441). The fact that he is refused by Miss Rupert and Marian's sense of filial duty releases him from the sense of doom that he felt was settling upon him hardly mitigates Milvain's execrable behaviour. His later successful courting of the rich and recently widowed Amy Reardon merely accentuates the ironic counterpointing of social and professional success and the moral turpitude which makes such success possible by which the novel traces Milvain's progress.

Despite his manipulation of others and the cold-blooded pursuit of his aims, Milvain is not so much a villain as he at first appears. While he achieves a good deal of the social and financial success that the literary marketplace offers to the entrepreneur, Milvain is also a slave to its demands. The literary man of the day must be alive to the hungers of the marketplace, but he must also be prepared to work to satisfy those hungers if he would have the success that is there. Milvain's 'villainy' consists largely of a deliberate embracing of the debased literary tastes of the day and of his decision to satisfy those tastes at whatever cost. In the personal sphere Milvain conducts his affairs by the same rules that he uses for his professional life, and is self-deluded enough to imagine that his admissions of selfish conduct exculpate him from moral responsibility for his acts. The decline of traditional values in the modern world--especially the modern literary world--make possible the villainy of Milvain, but it is equally clear that in the coarsening of his character Milvain is as much a victim as anyone else.

Whelpdale belongs to the same school as Milvain, although on first mentioning him Milvain is none too complimentary, referring to him as "that ass Whelpdale" (11). Later, it becomes known that Whelpdale has tried and failed to score a success with a novel which consists largely of dialogue, which prompts Milvain to declare him clever but unpractical (132). Still later Whelpdale demonstrates his enterprising initiative by trying to establish himself as a "literary adviser" to aspiring novelists, a ploy which prompts Milvain to remark with a sneer: "Now that's one of the finest jokes I ever heard. A man who can't get anyone to publish his own books makes a living by telling other people how to write!" (148) But the modest success of this venture pales into insignificance when Whelpdale announces his inspirational new title, Chit-Chat, for the old paper

Chat, and an editorial policy designed to provide easily digestible material for the mass reading audience.

> "What I . . . propose is this:--I know you will laugh again, but I will demonstrate to you that I am right. No article in the paper is to measure more than two inches in length, and every inch must be broken into at least two paragraphs."
>
> "Superb!"
>
> "But you are joking, Mr. Whelpdale!" exclaimed Dora.
>
> "No, I am perfectly serious. Let me explain my principle. I would have the paper address itself to the quarter-educated; that is to say, the great new generation that is being turned out by the Board schools, the young men and women who can just read, but are incapable of sustained attention. People of this kind want something to occupy them in trains and on 'buses and trams. As a rule they care for no newspapers except the Sunday ones; what they want is the lightest and frothiest of chit-chatty information--bits of stories, bits of description, bits of scandal, bits of jokes, bits of statistics, bits of foolery. Am I not right? Everything must be very short, two inches at the utmost; their attention can't sustain itself beyond two inches. Even chat is too solid for them: they want chit-chat."
>
> (418-19)

That Whelpdale has managed to catch the currents of his time is reflected in the rapt attention paid to the scheme by the shrewd Milvain (419), and in the almost immediate success that the transformed paper scores.

> Whelpdale's noteworthy idea triumphed; the weekly paper called Chat was thoroughly transformed, and appeared as Chit-Chat. From the first number, the success of the enterprise was beyond doubt; in a month's time all England was ringing with the fame of this noble new development of journalism; the proprietor saw his way to a solid fortune, and other men who

> had money to embark began to scheme imitative publications. It was clear that the quarter-educated would soon be abundantly provided with literature to their taste.
>
> (436)

The final note of triumph for Whelpdale in his climb to social and financial respectability comes in his marriage to Dora Milvain (463), which prompts Milvain's grudging admission: "You have exercised ingenuity and perseverance; you have your reward" (463).

Whelpdale's function in the novel is twofold: on the one hand he serves to illustrate what it takes in 'Grub Street' not only to survive but, by serving the quasi-literate, to conquer; and, on the other hand, he serves as a contrast to Reardon as artist and to Biffen as a sexual being. As a conqueror of 'Grub Street', Whelpdale has an inauspicious beginning as a novelist. In this context, as P. J. Keating notes, Whelpdale's lack of success has nothing to do with a lack of talent.[20] According to Biffen--whose artistic integrity is established early in the novel as unimpeachable--the novel Whelpdale could not get published "has considerable merit" (132). Whelpdale's chief deficiency--like Reardon's--is that what he produces does not have, in Milvain's words, "market value" (132). However, unlike Reardon, Whelpdale quickly discovers what does have market value, and he is practical and venial enough to capitalize on it. Whereas Reardon has the kind of artistic integrity which makes him resist the temptation to prostitute his talent, Whelpdale's scruples collapse quickly in the face of practical necessity. Furthermore, while Reardon recognizes spurious material for what it is, Whelpdale tries to mask the meretriciousness of his scheme with the notion that his paper will encourage "a taste for reading" (420). The artistic wealth in the midst of lonely penury of the one serves as a mordant contrast to the prostitution of talent and the increasing affluence and social respectability of the other.

Whelpdale's efforts at securing matrimonial bliss seem to be a comic counterpart to Biffen's sense of loneliness and sexual frustration. When Reardon and Biffen visit Whelpdale (193ff.) they are treated to Whelpdale's tale of his projected marriage to the latest in a succession of young women whom he has tried to persuade to share his poverty. His enthusiasm and romanticizing of the pretty Birmingham woman who has been driven from the parental home by a tyrannical father (194) and who has had to subsist in the metropolis suggest something of the later idealization of the perfidious Amy Reardon by Biffen (444). Whelpdale's subsequent marital bliss with Dora Milvain is in sharp contrast to the suicide that ends Biffen's sorry existence, a suicide prompted in great part by his sense of loneliness and frustration. Indeed, the novel makes clear that immediately following a meeting between Biffen and Whelpdale in which Whelpdale rather blithely prattles on about his impending marital happiness, Biffen sees death as desirable

(448). Whelpdale himself seems conscious of the parallels between his career and those of his friends. Yet he is also entirely conscious of what he rightly regards as their nobler ideals and greater aspirations which have come to naught whereas he and his less worthy aims have prospered.

> "Why in the name of sense and justice have I been suffered to attain this blessedness? Think of the days when I all but starved in my Albany Street garret, scarcely better off than poor, dear old Biffen! Why should I have come to this, and Biffen have poisoned himself in despair? He was a thousand times a better and cleverer fellow than I. And poor old Reardon, dead in misery! Could I for a moment compare with him?"
>
> (462-63)

Yet, on the whole, Whelpdale is not a wholly reprehensible figure, despite his ready bowing to the forces of commercialism. In his abandonment of non-marketable novel writing for journalistic production he demonstrates the kind of versatility that it takes in his day to be socially and financially successful. His ideas for the literary market are the results of inspired tradesmanship rather than of a carefully contrived and developing scheme for personal aggrandizement such as characterize Milvain. Not blessed with Milvain's cunning, Whelpdale does not use or manipulate people for his own selfish ends as Milvain does. And while Milvain increasingly loses his powers of discrimination of value in literary endeavour, Whelpdale clearly recognizes the superior literary skill, intellect and sensibility of Biffen and Reardon. Whelpdale's career, like that of Milvain, illustrates society's rewards for the shoddy and mean while at the same time it denies the value and place of the legitimate artist.

Alfred Yule is the principal representative of the group of what might be called belletrists in the novel. As P. J. Keating notes, Yule is also the only major literary figure whose career is largely over when the novel opens.[21] Nonetheless he is still a considerable enough figure that Milvain takes a vain pleasure in Yule's notice of his article. Yule's own pedantic articles--usually the results of meticulous research by his daughter Marian, and sometimes written by her--are not in public demand, and Yule finds it difficult just to maintain his standard of living (85). Life in the literary world for him has been, as he tells Marian often enough, one of unremitting toil and bitter disappointment (261-62, 283-84), and he waits for an opportunity which will enable him to maintain himself and his family in some comfort. The one last opportunity for an editorial post also represents Yule's hope to resuscitate his languishing reputation and to take revenge on his literary world enemies.

His best chance to do so comes with the suggestion that he is being considered for the editorship of The Study (79), and, as the narrator suggests, the post will be the vehicle by which Yule will exercise dictatorial power.

> If, indeed, the man Rackett thought of offering him the editorship of The Study he might

> even yet taste the triumphs for which he so vehemently longed. The Study was a weekly paper of fair repute. Fadge had harmed it, no doubt of that . . . . But a return to the old earnestness would doubtless set all right again. And the joy of sitting in that dictatorial chair! The delight of having his own organ once more, of making himself a power in the world of letters, of emphasizing to a large audience his developed methods of criticism! . . . his fingers itched to have hold of the editorial pen. Ha, Ha! Like the war-horse he snuffed the battle afar off.
> (85-6)

When this dream comes to naught, Yule's spirits are revived by the bequest that Marian receives from her uncle's will, and, together with Hinks and Quarmby, who themselves hope to benefit from Yule's return to editorial power, he tries to cajole Marian into investing her money in a proposed new review of which he would be editor (285). But this plan too comes to nothing, and Yule spends his final days in a rural retreat in physical blindness and spiritual bitterness. The final touch of ignominy for Yule comes with word of his death--conveyed as a piece of chit-chat at a cocktail party given by Jasper and Amy Milvain (467).

In a number of ways, Alfred Yule is reminiscent of Edwin Reardon. Like Reardon after him, Yule started his career as a novelist, dramatist and sometime essayist (84ff.). With only modest accomplishments in each area Yule decides that editing with the occasional provocative essay is his true métier in the literary world. But as the world changes, Yule does not and in the face of impending failure to satisfy the developing literary tastes of the day, he becomes embittered and uses his posts less for creative purposes than for the destruction of his enemies. Like Reardon, Yule's chief defect is his inclination to take himself and his literary efforts too seriously in an age which is satisfied with meretriciousness.

> Had Yule been content to manufacture a novel or a play with due disregard for literary honour, he might perchance have made a mercantile success; but the poor fellow had not pliancy enough for this. He took his efforts _au grand sérieux_; thought he was producing works of art; pursued his ambition in a spirit of fierce conscientiousness . . . but there was no disguising from himself that his life had been a failure. And the thought tormented him.
> (85)

Yule's essay on Lord Herbert of Cherbury (288) and Reardon's even more esoteric material on the Latin poets not only tie the two men together, labouring in vain in the literary vineyard, they also suggest how much out of their time the two men are, a suggestion made explicit by Milvain's comment on Reardon (5) and the narrator's remark on Yule (158). Such literature is, as Yule admits, "swept aside among the rubbish of the magazines" (288). Even as an editor, the last bastion for those who would exercise arbitrary power, Yule would now be a failure, as Marian clearly recognizes (289). And the content of the proposed new review (281-82) suggests how dubious--in the time that can make an instant success of a paper like _Chit-Chat_--such a venture would be from the commercial point of view.

In their personal lives, too, Reardon and Yule are connected. Each feels himself to be cut out for extraordinary things. As Yule tells Marian during the discussion about the projected review, "My dear, I am not a man fitted for subordinate places. My nature is framed for authority" (287). And Amy's principal reason for marrying Reardon is her conviction that he will be a great man (56). Finally, in both the Reardon marriage and the Yule an obvious disparity of minds between the marriage partners leads to great unhappiness.

Alfred Yule is a man who exercises in his home the same kind of tyranny that characterizes his literary relations, but in both spheres the times have passed him by. His wife and daughter fear him more than they revere him, and the world of literature has come to ignore him. A lifetime of work has left him with little more than memories of past glories and a bitterness that cannot be erased. In a world of trivialities integrity and idealism do not amount to much, as Yule discovers. The discovery makes him angry and bitter and it is these qualities which colour his last days. In his desperate efforts to practise literary endeavour as he always has, Yule is an older generation Reardon, and his fate suggests what Reardon's might have been. Grub Street's atavism encompasses all generations.

Harold Biffen is the clearest example in the novel of those who are dedicated to the cause of art for its own sake. Like Shylock in _The Merchant of Venice_ Biffen appears directly in very few scenes in _New Grub Street_, yet his influence is a continuing one. His dedication to the cause of art is a touchstone against which the commitment of others is measured. Biffen is depicted throughout as a man to whom the material things of life count for little, from the unimpressive figure he presents to the world (126-27) to the utter disregard for life and limb as he rescues his manuscript from a fire in his tenement flat (391ff.). Indeed, Biffen's life seems to consist of working on his novel, "Mr. Bailey, Grocer," which, as he describes it, is a work in the realm of the "ignobly decent" (129), tutoring working class people so they can "try" various civil service and university entrance examinations (128), and engaging in conversations with Reardon on such topics as Greek metrics (127), modern novelistic practice (129), the art of fiction (131), women, marriage, sexual tensions, poverty, and travel (332ff.). His carefully plotted suicide (448-49), the end result of loneliness, frustration, and rejection both as an artist and a person, seems to suggest the pathetic end of a figure whose idealism has rendered him wholly unable to deal with life's practical exigencies.

Yet for all his idealistic dedication to the cause of art, Biffen is in many ways more practical than Reardon. In a discussion about the nature of art and its relation to life, Biffen's notion that the trivialities of life often determine the outcome of serious issues merely raises a scornful laugh from Reardon (130). But, in a fine ironic touch, just such an important issue--Reardon's reconciliation with his wife (313-14)--is decided by the very triviality mentioned by Biffen in conversation. In other ironic touches, it is the unmarried but perspicacious Biffen who sees the folly behind Reardon's idealization of marriage to a "kind-hearted work-girl" (334). And it is Biffen who offers advice to Reardon about some of the necessary compromises in life, in the light of which he urges his friend to swallow his pride and effect a reconciliation with his wife (401-02).

For all this practicality, however, Biffen is in the end unable to deal on his own terms with some of life's most pressing demands. Although he fully expects critical and public rejection of his daringly experimental novel, which goes even beyond the modest frontiers established by Reardon's efforts, he is still depressed when the expected rejection occurs (448). After Reardon's death he has no one to whom he can speak about the things that matter most to him, and the impossible dream of a union with the Amy of his imagination merely fills him with despair. If he cannot live as he would, Biffen decides to die as he will, and so he lays his meticulous plans to commit suicide with, as Milvain suggests (451), the least possible injury to the sensibilities of others.

Like Reardon, Biffen takes literary endeavour seriously and refuses to compromise on the issues that he considers important, regardless of the material cost to himself. And the cost in the world of modern Grub Street is high. Unlike

Reardon but like Milvain, Biffen is clear-sighted enough to see what it is that modern life requires for a successful materialistic conduct. In this context, Biffen can tell Reardon that to be born with intellect and sensibility and the dedication to art that he and Reardon have is to be condemned to a life of unnecessary difficulty.

> "The art of living is the art of compromise. We have no right to foster sensibilities, and conduct ourselves as if the world allowed of ideal relations; it leads to misery for others as well as ourselves. Genial coarseness is what it behoves [sic] men like you and me to cultivate . . . . What are we--you and I? . . . We have no belief in immortality; we are convinced that this life is all; we know that human happiness is the origin and end of all moral considerations. What right have we to make ourselves and others miserable for the sake of an obstinate idealism? It is our duty to make the best of circumstances. Why will you go cutting your loaf with a razor when you have a serviceable breadknife?"
>
> (401)

And yet it is this difficult road of "obstinate idealism" that Biffen himself has chosen to follow. While his death can be seen as the deliberately self-assertive act of a man, who, unable to deal with life, is at least able to face extinction on his own terms, it is also clearly the only alternative available to a man whose literary and personal ideals have no place in the world of his day. This is a point made rhetorically by the narrator in the opening paragraphs of chapter XXXI. In the world of modern Grub Street, the forces of commercialism exact too much from even the most persevering idealist.

Despite the fact that Milvain opens and closes the novel and is a dominant figure throughout, the most important character is Edwin Reardon. Like Alfred Yule, Reardon has already reached the apex of his literary career when the novel opens. The author of two mildly successful works, Reardon has decided to make the world of novelistic fiction the means whereby to earn a living and to achieve distinction in the eyes of his fellows. However, it is early established that Reardon, again like Yule, is unlikely to produce work of any sort which will appeal to that mass reading public whose tastes are better accommodated by the enterprising journalists like Milvain and Whelpdale, and by such novelists as the popular Markland (147).

> Those two books of his were not of a kind to win popularity. They dealt with no particular class of society (unless one makes a distinct class of people who have brains), and they lacked local colour. Their interest was almost purely psychological. It was clear that the author had no faculty for constructing a story, and that pictures of active life were not to be expected of him; he could never appeal to the multitude. But strong characterisation was within his scope, and an intellectual fervour, appetising to a small section of refined readers, marked all his best pages.
> (54)

The narrator's points, made here rhetorically, are secured in a more dramatic fashion by the later events of the novel and by Biffen's remark, " . . . the best things you have done are altogether in conflict with novelistic conventionalities" (131). Clearly, Reardon's dream of what successful novel writing can produce (51) and the reality of what he can hope to achieve, given his literary talents and prospective reading audience, are in chilling contrast. This is something which has already become patently obvious to Reardon since his working days have quickly become a constant struggle to produce work which will at one and the same time satisfy his aesthetic sensibilities and be marketable enough to enable him to maintain his family in its overly pretentious social and financial posture.

His almost desperate efforts to produce such work finally result in the meretricious "Margaret Home" and the attempt at a one volume sensational novel which is refused by the one publisher who might have published it (197). In a final effort to re-kindle his almost extinguished imagination and to save money, Reardon hits on a plan to spend some months at a sea-side resort while his wife and son spend some time with his mother-in-law. But, when he leaps at the chance to acquire a dependable income in the form of his old position as a clerk, and then later as secretary instead of following the original plan, Reardon makes the separation from his wife permanent since she will not accept the concomitant decline in social status (205ff. and 313ff.). What appears to be a poignant reconciliation between Reardon and his wife at the death bed of their son, and just prior to Reardon's own death in chapter XXXII does nothing to mitigate the essential facts that as a husband for Amy and as a writer in modern Grub Street Reardon has been an abject failure.

In the figure of Reardon Gissing presents an individual with a considerable literary talent, a talent which although not so radically experimental as that of Biffen yet is not conventional enough for popular success. Indeed, novel writing itself is not Reardon's first choice for literary expression. Like Yule, Reardon would rather write pedantic essays on the writers of classical antiquity and live a leisured life as a scholar. As the narrator comments: "It was significant, however, that no native impulse had directed him to novel-writing. His intellectual temper was that of the student, the scholar, but strongly blended with a love of independence which had always made him think with distaste of a teacher's life" (51). And Amy, in thinking of all the benefits that might be theirs from the money she inherits--a reconciliation, a chance to travel, an opportunity for a re-kindling of Reardon's literary powers--yet thinks of the undesirable alternative.

> On the other hand, was it not more likely that he would lapse into a life of scholarly self-indulgence, such as he had often told her was his ideal? In that event, what tedium and regret lay before her! Ten thousand pounds sounded well, but what did it represent in reality? A poor four hundred a year, perhaps; mere decency of obscure existence, unless her husband could glorify it by winning fame. If he did nothing, she would be the wife of a man who had failed in literature. She would not be able to take a place in society. Life would be supported without a struggle; nothing more to be hoped.
>
> (323-24)

There is a good deal of perspicacity in this view which has its foundation not only in Reardon's oft-declared preference for scholarly leisure but also in his obviously relished literary discussions with Biffen and in his statement about the folly of trying to earn a living as a conscientious writer in modern Grub Street.

> "How I envy those clerks who go by to their offices in the morning! There's the day's work cut out for them; no question of mood and feeling; they have just to work at something, and when evening comes, they have earned their wages, they are free to rest and enjoy themselves. What an insane thing it is to make literature one's only means of support! When the most trivial accident may at any time prove fatal to one's power of work for weeks or months. No, that is the unpardonable sin! To make a trade of an art!"
>
> (43)

Reardon's problem then is twofold: on the professional level it is that of the struggle of a good but not great writer who attempts to combine literary principle with popular success; on the personal level it is that of a disintegrating marriage due to the incompatibility of goals of the marriage partners. The failure to solve the problem on the one level leads directly to the exacerbation of the problem on the other.

Professionally, Reardon is prepared to admit the truth of Amy's echoing of Milvain's sentiment that literature has become a trade (43), and that it is no longer possible to imagine oneself in the position of a Johnson or even a Coleridge. But he also knows with no less clarity that as a writer he is constitutionally incapable of writing the kind of material which commands a large reading public. While not the Flaubertian figure that Biffen is, he must nevertheless write what he can as well as he can and hope that others will reward his achievements by buying his books. In making his point with Amy Reardon, he says:

> "What you and he [Milvain] say is true enough; the misfortune is that I can't act upon it. I am no uncompromising artistic pedant; I am quite willing to try and do the kind of work that will sell; under the circumstances it would be a kind of insanity if I refused. But power doesn't answer to the will. My efforts are utterly vain; I suppose the prospect of pennilessness is itself a hindrance; the fear haunts me. With such terrible real things pressing upon me, my imagination can shape nothing substantial. When I have laboured out a story, I suddenly see it in a light of such contemptible triviality that to work at it is an impossible thing."
>
> (43-44)

Constitutional inability notwithstanding, Reardon must accede to financial exigency and he manages to grind out 'Margaret Home' at so many 'slips' a day. The mechanical drudgery of quantifying literature in this way weighs heavily on him and he turns for relief to Homer.

> In a few minutes it occurred to him that it would be delightful to read a scrap of the 'Odyssey'; he went to the shelves on which were his classical books, took the desired volume and opened it where Odysseus speaks to Nausicaa . . . . Yes, yes; that was not written at so many pages a day, with a workhouse clock clanging its admonition at the poet's ear. How it freshened the soul! How the eyes grew dim with a rare joy in the sounding of those nobly sweet hexameters!
>
> (111)

The financial demands of daily living, however, make such respite merely escapism from a more sordid reality, as Reardon himself clearly recognizes.

In the face of the artistic and commercial failure of a novel which he scarcely wishes to acknowledge himself, Reardon is driven in desperation to try his hand at the kind of popular drivel published by such enterprising new publishers as Jedwood. But this experiment too fails because the book is not good enough for the refined sensibilities on the one hand and not debased enough for popular taste on the other (197). It is at this point, having exhausted all the novelistic possibilities to which he is proud to lay claim, and having tried even those which make him despise himself for his lack of artistic integrity (186), that Reardon decides to accept the clerkship, a decision which is tantamount to a return to the social and financial level from which he had originally emerged. It is this decision which hastens the spiritual as well as the physical rupture in the Reardon marriage.

The same decline from idealism to sordid reality is traced in the personal sphere. Initially, Reardon saw his marriage to Amy as "the crown of a successful literary career" (56). Mistaking the ease with which he publishes his first two novels for genuine literary success, Reardon plunges into marriage confident that he has discovered the means whereby he can achieve distinction and provide Amy with the social and material success that she wants. But despite the fact that Amy marries Reardon because she is convinced he is an extraordinary man (214), it is increasingly clear that her expectations are primarily of the material sort. The inevitable slide toward penury sharpens Amy's tongue (206) and intensifies her hostility toward Reardon's seeming intransigence about compromising his literary principles. While fully conscious that his own conduct is at least partly to blame for their growing estrangement, Reardon seems curiously powerless to do anything about it.

> He felt all that he expressed, but at the same time it seemed to him that he had the choice between two ways of uttering his emotion--the tenderly appealing and the sternly reproachful: he took the latter course because it was less natural to him than the former. His desire was to impress Amy with the bitter intensity of his sufferings; pathos and loving words seemed to have lost their power upon her, but perhaps if he yielded to that other form of passion she would be shaken out of her coldness. The stress of injured love is always tempted to speech which seems its contradiction. Reardon had the strangest mixture of pain and pleasure in flinging out these first words of wrath that he had ever addressed to Amy; they consoled him under the humiliating sense of his weakness, and yet he watched with dread his wife's countenance as she listened to him.
> (173)

The final break comes when, despite the sufficiency for a modest home on the income from the clerkship, Amy refuses to follow her husband into what she regards as social ignominy. The reconciliation scene hardly masks the fact that while Reardon needed a wife who would love him for himself (177) and work to bolster his feelings against insecurity (173), Amy wanted a husband who would provide her with material and social distinction (205, 214).

Gissing has captured nicely the essence of Reardon's struggle on both levels. Few other novelists have depicted the agony of the professional writer's problems in trying to compose in the midst of circumstances inimical to creative expression with such conviction. Described, as P. J. Keating points out, in the terminology traditional to the romantic spirit,[22] Reardon's artistic problems are convincingly rendered, even on so elementary an issue as basic composition.

> Sometimes the three hours' labour of a morning resulted in half-a-dozen lines, corrected into illegibility. His brain would not work; he could not recall the simplest synonyms; intolerable faults of composition drove him mad. He would write a sentence beginning thus: 'She took a book with a look of--;' or thus: 'A revision of this decision would have made him an object of derision.' Or, if the period were otherwise inoffensive, it ran in a rhythmic gallop which was torment to the ear. (110)

Reardon's difficulties in this regard have their comic counterpart in Mr. Baker's assertion: "'I can make headway with the other things, sir,' he said, striking the table lightly with his clenched fist. 'There's handwriting, there's orthography, there's arithmetic; I'm not afraid of one of 'em, as Mr. Biffen'll tell you, sir. But when it comes to compersition, that brings out the sweat on my forehead, I do assure you'" (188).

And yet the disintegration in Reardon's life is not caused solely by such extraneous pressures as the need to compose while listening to the bell from the Marylebone Workhouse. Reardon's almost morbid sensitivity is shown to be the principal weakness in his character, and this combined with the extraneous pressures ensures his decline. Even as he watches in almost horrified fascination his marriage begins to disintegrate, and yet nursing his hurt pride he is unwilling to take the steps which he knows are necessary to halt the erosion. After the separation from Amy, the feverish wandering about the streets at night, the absent-minded muttering of poetry in front of shop windows (307), and the pathetic figure he presents to others parallel in personal terms the decline rendered so well on the professional level. Like Biffen's, Reardon's career shows what can happen to the conscientious artist and sensitive man in the coarsening world of modern Grub Street. The novel traces that effect relentlessly to its inevitable conclusion.

The principal female characters in the novel, Amy Reardon and Marian Yule, exist as characters in their own right, but they serve more obviously to point up the vulnerability of those who must depend on the Grub Street livelihood made by others. When that livelihood is secure, the woman is well and fully defined not only socially but also in her own mind. When the livelihood is less secure, the external pressures force the woman to pursue the definition she wants by means which are detrimental to her own self-image. In Amy's case, the Grub Street connection is supposed to provide her with a sense of social and material distinction. Of her numerous suitors, only Edwin Reardon the novelist will bring her the social acceptance that belongs to the wife of a successful man of letters. When, as a result of impending penury, Reardon decides to resume his clerkship, Amy will not follow him into what she regards as social and financial ignominy. She makes quite clear that she will be a dutiful Victorian wife only under duress (319). The sudden and unexpected inheritance and the death of Reardon are merely the external trappings which lead to Amy's marriage with Milvain. By the time of the marriage it has been made dramatically obvious that Amy is kindred spirit to Milvain since she espouses his notions of literary endeavour as a trade (43), develops an interest in the practical matters of publishing (59-60), and makes unfortunate comparisons between Milvain's obviously successful forays into the literary jungle and Reardon's just as obvious failures (141-42). In the course of the novel, there is a coarsening of Amy's character and sensibilities, as she comes less and less to understand and appreciate those things which animate Reardon and becomes more and more enamoured of those which indicate material success. After her parting from Reardon the process is speeded up and, after tracing rhetorically Amy's intellectual 'progress' the narrator comments: "She was becoming a typical woman of the new time, the woman who has developed concurrently with journalistic enterprise" (327). Under the stress of financial stringency Amy is hardened almost beyond Reardon's recognition (206). The physical parting, when it comes, is merely the external sign of a rupture which is already beyond repair. In the final scene of the novel, both Milvain and Amy bask in smugness as they contemplate the world they have 'conquered': Milvain has married a woman of good taste, looks, charm, easy amiability, and money; Amy has finally captured a literary figure whose enterprising initiative will provide her with the social and financial distinction that she so desperately craves.

Amy's cousin, Marian Yule, spends most of her time in the Reading Room of the British Museum, researching the esoteric material that her father uses for his pedantic journal articles. Subjected to a tyranny which expresses itself personally as well as professionally Marian is clearly in thrall to the demands of Grub Street through her father. But in watching her father age prematurely as a consequence of the viciousness of the modern Grub Street, in suffering her own personal life to be usurped by her father, and in noting the fate of such pathetic figures as Hinks and Quarmby, Marian imagines that all are in thrall to a profession which seems to elicit the worst in men. It is not surprising that on occasion she perceives life as she and others like her are living it as a kind of literary hell.

> . . . she looked up at the windows beneath the dome and saw that they were a dusky yellow.

> Then her eye discerned an official walking along the upper gallery, and in pursuance of her grotesque humour, her mocking misery, she likened him to a black lost soul, doomed to wander in an eternity of vain research along endless shelves. Or again, the readers who sat here at these radiating lines of desks, what were they but hapless flies caught in a huge web, its nucleus the great circle of the Catalogue? Darker, darker. From the towering wall of volumes seemed to emanate visible motes, intensifying the obscurity; in a moment the book-lined circumference of the room would be but a featureless prison-limit. (95)

And, in speaking later to her father about the de-humanizing conditions of the modern literary scene, she says in exasperation: "I wish I could have done forever with the hateful profession that so poisons men's minds" (259).

Marian's only respite from such a world comes with Milvain's appearance on the scene, and she responds eagerly to the advances he makes (168). But, given her acuity, it is no surprise to her that Milvain's interest in her stems largely from the money she is supposed to inherit (295). She is certainly clear-sighted enough to recognize the signs when he attempts to terminate the relationship when it becomes known that the inheritance will amount to very little (379). Marian's hopes for personal happiness and fulfillment are finally dashed with the news of her father's impending blindness and of Milvain's perfidy in courting the rich Miss Rupert while still engaged to Marian (460). The final view of Marian, working as an assistant librarian in a small country village, is that of a woman to whom the nightmare of the modern literary scene has become a reality. In the submersion of her own hopes and dreams, in the failure of the company from which her inheritance was to come, in her father's bitterness and despair, and in Milvain's having used her so that he might more effectively worship at the shrine of Grub Street success, "the hateful profession that so poisons men's minds" has had done with Marian.

In such other literary figures as the popular novelist Markland, the journalistic hangers-on such as Quarmby and Hinks, the jack-of-all-trades Sykes, whose powers of invention and prolific writing prowess (344) make pale those of others, and in such other female figures as Mrs. Yule, who is good enough to relieve her husband's sexual frustrations but not good enough to raise her own daughter (83), the always slightly breathless socialite Edith Carter, who always steps surreptitiously to Reardon's desk to try to catch a glimpse of a novel in the writing (122), Gissing has populated his literary world with a range from those who are directly involved in the literary scene of the day to those on the periphery of the world of literature whose lives just touch on books, or, even worse, only on the daily newspaper. The total effect is one of fulsomeness but not of bewildering complexity. The characters are drawn with conviction and power, and illustrate in human terms the writer's conception of the world they inhabit. The distinctions to be made among them are not the simplistic ones of 'good' or 'bad' but rather of those who refuse to accept and conduct their lives according to the dictates of a world shown to be increasingly commercial, material, vulgar and inhumane and those who do. It is part of the novel's satiric vision that those who luxuriate in such a world are those who are successful. But those who are successful in material terms pay part of their humanity as a result.

In Reardon, Biffen, Yule, Milvain, Whelpdale and several of the lesser literary figures, Gissing explores the various kinds of response to the demands of modern Grub Street. But in the personal and professional inter-actions of the four chief characters, Reardon, Milvain, Marian and Amy much of what the novel is about is presented microcosmically. And Gissing's deft interweaving of the narratives of these characters shows how far Gissing's art had advanced.

The personal and professional lives of Reardon and Milvain are shown to be in inverse proportion. In the professional sphere while Milvain moves from neophyte to successful journalist to editor, at the same time increasing in wealth, power and influence, Reardon moves from mildly successful novelist and essayist to would-be writer of sensation novels, while decreasing in wealth and influence. As they move in opposite directions their paths cross frequently as Milvain is a visitor to Reardon's household. The visits tend to emphasize the different directions in which the two careers are moving, a point which is too frequently made by Reardon's wife.

In the personal sphere, Milvain's growing self-assurance is in marked contrast to Reardon's need for reassurance and increasing despair. Milvain's success in dealing first with Marian Yule and ultimately with Amy Reardon, and Reardon's inability to keep his marriage together go far to explain the differences between the men. But, ultimately, it is Reardon's idealism with respect to love, marriage, and literature and Milvain's pragmatism in all areas which are contrasted. It is made dramatically clear by what happens to each of these men that in the world depicted in this novel those who are pragmatic are those who have worldly success, while, as Milvain tells Marian, "those who really have a high ideal either perish or struggle on in neglect" (459).

In much the same way, Amy Reardon and Marian Yule are studies in contrast and their careers are counterpointed. Furthermore, as defined by their relationships with Milvain and Reardon, Marian's idealism is contrasted to Amy's pragmatism. From the time of a fairly protected childhood to marriage to a promising novelist, Amy has had all the advantages that position and some money can bring. When her indigent husband promises to lead her into social disgrace, Amy refuses to follow and, as circumstance would have it, gets an opportunity to re-marry, this time with a man who can provide what she wants.

In contrast, Marian's has been a less salubrious beginning, and upon reaching adulthood she has had to sublimate her own wishes in favour of her father's. Getting the opportunity to express herself as a woman instead of a literary machine, Marian attaches herself to the perfidious Milvain, and tries to lose herself in the delusions of romantic love (300-01). Ditched by Milvain in favour of someone with more money, and beset by feelings of loyalty to her father, Marian is cast into disappointed spinsterhood.

Again, as in the former case, the point is made clear: selfish pragmatism leads to material and social satisfaction in the world of New Grub Street, while self-denying idealism leads only to frustration and unhappiness.

The sharing of certain attitudes and repetition of scenes help to distinguish the pragmatists and the idealists. Amy shares Milvain's attitude about what it takes to succeed in Grub Street, his interest in literary topics rather than literature, and her words of advice to her husband to write a marketable product (46) foreshadow Milvain's advice to Marian to try the same thing for precisely the same reason (381). At the same time, Reardon's declaration that he must write what he can anticipates Marian's reaction to the suggestion by Milvain. In each instance the pragmatism of Amy and Milvain contrasts sharply with the idealism of Reardon and Marian.

Reardon's pitiable death, Marian's spinsterhood, and the socially glittering ménage of Amy and Milvain demonstrate very well the failure of the idealists and the success of the pragmatists. The narrative lines are well drawn and deftly manipulated. The narratives of the others such as Whelpdale, Yule and Biffen are neatly interwoven to lend intensification, but they are never allowed to usurp the place of the narratives of the chief figures. The result is a finely sculpted narrative scheme which lends power and substance to the sombre view that the novel has of the world.

The narrator's control over his material is complete--thus avoiding the difficulties of the narrator's disappearance in some second phase novels--without being so obviously intrusive, a feature of the novels of the eighties. Rhetorical commentary such as that on Reardon's predilection for a leisured scholarly life rather than that of a struggling novelist (51), and on Amy's increasing interest in the mechanical details of the publishing industry (59-60) is entirely consistent with the development of the characters themselves. But such commentary, unlike that in many a first phase novel, supports rather than replaces the dramatic development of the major characters. Milvain's increasing pragmatism and decreasing sense of traditional moral standards, Amy's decreasing sensitivity to her husband's needs, and Reardon's increasingly enervating morbidity are all depicted with a sureness of touch that suggests the mature artist.

Occasionally, as in the following direct address to the reader, the narrator seems to abandon his objectivity and assumes a position analogous to that of the narrator of the first phase novels.

> The chances are that you have neither understanding nor sympathy for men such as Edwin Reardon and Harold Biffen. They merely provoke you. They seem to you inert, flabby, weakly envious, foolishly obstinate, impiously mutinous, and many other things. You are made angrily contemptuous by their failure to get on; why don't they bestir themselves, push and bustle, welcome kicks so long as halfpence follow, make place in the world's eye--in short, take a leaf from the book of Mr. Jasper Milvain?
>
> (387)

There are other examples of this sort of commentary, such as that dealing with Biffen's problem in securing a reader's ticket to the British Museum (50), that on the fatuous belief of the middle class that it is easy and cheap to maintain personal cleanliness, even in the midst of London slums (222), and that dealing with London pawnbrokers (229). But such passages, so much a characteristic feature of many a first phase novel, are in fact, as R. L. Selig notes,[23] not characteristic of this one. Furthermore, whereas in the earlier novels such passages tend to be unashamedly didactic in their intention to provoke a response on the part of the reader, in this novel such passages evince a wry irony that is part of the novel's depiction of the conditions of life in Grub Street. For the most part, the narrated portions of the novel are conducted according to a rigid degree of objectivity. The drama is that of the characters' lives, not that of the commentary on those lives. The result of this finely modulated control is a novel which achieves a satisfying balance in dramatic development and rhetorical commentary, each of which illuminates and sustains the other and invests the novel with total meaning.

The drama of the characters' lives takes place in a finely crafted context the fidelity to life of which caused a storm of controversy just after the publication of *New Grub Street*. Andrew Lang's bland assertion in the *Author* of 1 July 1891 that he had not known such "unhappy *ratés*" as those who dominate Gissing's novel[24] provoked a rash of replies, with, as M. C. Donnelly notes, a number of telling remarks about the insular experience of certain prosperous *belletrists*.[25] But such an argument seems to concentrate too narrowly on the novel as an exposé of actual conditions in the literary life of London in the 1890's. While it is undoubtedly true that the novel uses the literary world of the day for many of its concrete details, it has been justly noted that *New Grub Street* is, ultimately, an attempt "to analyse a whole society's response to literary culture."[26] The world of literary endeavour in this view is the vehicle by which Gissing explores the effect in dramatic terms of the gradual cultural levelling that he perceived taking place in his society.

The society of the day, as the novel presents it, is dominated by the glaring paradox that while more and more people than ever before can read, there is at the same time a gradual erosion of traditionally understood cultural values. This erosion leads in turn to a coarsening, a hardening of sensibilities and humane values which bodes ill in every respect for the health of society. The causative agent in the decline is seen to be the democratizing influence which manifests itself particularly in educational policies, resulting, as Whelpdale explains, in a "great new generation . . . the young men and women who can just read, but are incapable of sustained attention" (419). It is to this reading public, the "quarter-educated", that he addresses his paper Chit-Chat. The immediate success of the paper is testimony not only to Whelpdale's initiative and ingenuity, but, in this context, to the great and growing number of this kind of readership. That such a readership is gradually assuming prominence in the nation is evident in the Baker episode in chapter XVI and in this comment by the narrator.

> In these days of examinations, numbers of men in a poor position--clerks chiefly--conceive a hope that by 'passing' this, that, or the other formal test they may open for themselves a new career. Not a few such persons nourish preposterous ambitions; there are warehouse clerks privately preparing (without any means or prospect of them) for a call to the Bar, drapers' assistants who 'go in' for the preliminary examination of the College of Surgeons, and untaught men innumerable who desire to procure enough show of education to be eligible for a curacy. Candidates of this stamp frequently advertise in the newspapers for cheap tuition, or answer advertisements which are intended to appeal to them; they pay from sixpence to half-a-crown--rarely as much as the latter sum.
>
> (128)

Milvain, for his part, aims at a slightly higher class of readership, perhaps the "philistines" of Arnold's Culture and Anarchy: "For my own part, I shan't be able to address the bulkiest multitude; my talent doesn't lend itself to that form. I shall write for the upper middle-class of intellect, the people who like to feel that what they are reading has some special cleverness, but who can't distinguish between stones and paste" (9).

Given the numbers of those in the novel who are engaged in literary activity of one sort or another--Milvain, Whelpdale, and Fadge in journalism; Biffen, Markland, and Reardon in novel writing; Yule, Hinks, Quarmby, and Marian Yule in belles lettres; and even the Milvain sisters, Maud and Dora, in writing children's books--it is hardly surprising that there is a veritable flood-tide of literary material inundating the public of the day. In such a context, as the enterprising Milvain points out, the man who hopes to make a living from literature must realize that he is trying to market a commodity in a marketplace in which there are already plenty of viands. He must therefore know what present tastes are and seek to satisfy these (4-5). In the event that he is unable to determine exactly what is wanted then he must strive to create a taste for his work, even if he must "dance on his head in the middle of the street" (350). Those who are able to manipulate the gullible public--regarded in the novel as P. J. Keating notes as "a vast, inert, helpless and hopeless mass"[27]--are those who succeed. Those who are foolish enough to be wedded to the traditional notion of the literary man as a purveyor of culture, learning, and moral scruple, and who are unable to adapt to the changing conditions necessary for literary survival, are doomed to failure and rejection. Indeed, with such forces as are rampant in the civilization of this time, the traditional figures are destroyed. In the world of literature as in Darwinian nature the imperative rule has become the survival of the fittest. Milvain makes the point rhetorically in an attempt to rationalize his own behaviour (415), but it is also secured in a more dramatic way in the conflict between Fadge and Yule and in the fates of the principal characters.

With literary endeavour seen to be merely a part of a vast commercialism, the rhetoric of trade and manufacture comes to predominance in the novel. As a paper manufacturer John Yule characteristically speaks of the "business of literature" (18), as do those exponents of the notion that literature is a trade like any other, Amy Reardon and Milvain. And terms like "literary production" and "manufacture" occur again and again, as R. L. Selig notes.[28] But even Reardon, the man who tries heroically to resist these debasing tendencies, is inadvertently led to quantify his own work at so many "slips" a day (107). Verbal usage of this sort is not just a device to suggest the gradual coarsening of sensibilities of individual characters, it is also used to suggest the shift that has occurred in the thinking of literate society itself from literature as a cultural expression inspired by the creative imagination to promote æsthetic and moral ends to a product which is mechanically churned out to titillate an increasingly debased public taste.

The fading away of traditional values and the coming of the new day are shown in the disparaging remarks that Yule makes to Marian about her lack of Latin (153), in the nice distinction made by the narrator between Amy and her mother with regard to public reputation (217-18), in Hinks' and Quarmby's vain and pathetic waiting for a return to the halcyon days of journalistic power, and in Marian's despairing cry about wishing to have done with the profession that now poisons men's minds. New Grub Street clearly suggests that in other days, when more traditional values obtained, those like Yule, Biffen and Reardon might have had more success both personally and professionally; but these days of the "quarter-educated", when the mass reading audience concerns itself only with "what the queen eats" and "how Gladstone's collars are made" (420), have produced the conditions which reduce men with literary talent and integrity to bitterness and despair. In such a context these men will almost certainly end their lives in "failure and destitution" (386). It is a sombre and disturbing vision.

In concretizing this powerful vision of a society moving toward cultural barbarism, Gissing has presented in New Grub Street not only a record of the lives of the individuals in a particular time and place, but also a redaction of the forces seeking to undercut the cultural meaning of those lives and of the lives of those who follow. While no easy solutions are offered--indeed the book's vision is pessimistic--the novel is æsthetically satisfying. With a gallery of vital, memorable and convincing characters, in a finely crafted and deftly handled narrative and in a carefully created and objectively sustained context, New Grub Street is testament to the mature powers of an artist who, for virtually the first time, is in confident command of all his materials. As a direct result, this novel achieves an impact which none of the earlier novels has.

2b. The Whirlpool

After a mid-afternoon social gathering at the home of Mrs. Littlestone, Alma Rolfe contrives to meet Felix Dymes, her agent, so that they may discuss the publicity campaign to be mounted in preparation for Alma's forthcoming public debut as a concert violinist. Both are somewhat mystified by the appearance of a very flattering advertisement which has already been published. Each thinks the other has acted unilaterally in the matter, and each is exercised at the apparent lack of consultation. As they meet outside, feelings are strained.

> As soon as she had taken leave, Dymes followed her. He came up to her side at a few yards from the house, and they walked together, without speaking, until Alma turned into the first quiet street.
>
> "I give you my word," she began, "that I know nothing whatever about that paper."
>
> "I believe you, and I'm sorry I made a row," Dymes replied. "There's no harm done. I dare say I shall be hearing more about it."
>
> "I have some photographs here," said Alma, touching her sealskin bag. "Will you take them?"
>
> "Thanks. But there's a whole lot of things to be arranged. We can't talk here. Let's go to my rooms."
>
> He spoke as though nothing were more natural. Alma, the blood throbbing at her temples, saw him beckon a crawling hansom.
>
> "I can't come--now. I have a dreadful headache."
>
> "You only want to be quiet. Come along." The hansom had pulled up. Alma, ashamed to resist under the eyes of the driver, stepped in, and her companion placed himself at her side. As soon as they drove away he caught her hand and held it tightly.
>
> "I can't go to your rooms," said Alma, after a useless resistance. "My head is terrible.

Tell me whatever you have to say, and then take me to Baker Street Station. I'll see you again in a day or two."

She did not feign the headache. It had been coming on since she left home, and was now so severe that her eyes closed under the torture of the daylight.

"A little rest and you'll be all right," said Dymes. Five minutes more would bring them to their destination. Alma pulled her hand away violently.

"If you don't stop him, I shall."

"You mean it? As you please. You know what I--" Alma raised herself, drew the cabman's attention, and bade him drive to Baker Street. There was a short silence, Dymes glaring and muttering inarticulately.

"Of course, if you really have a bad headache," he growled at length.

"Indeed I have--and you treat me very unkindly."

"Hang it, Alma, don't speak like that! As if I could be unkind to you!"

He secured her hand again, and she did not resist. Then they talked of business, settled one or two matters, appointed another meeting. As they drew near to the station, Alma spoke impulsively, with a bewildered look.

"I shouldn't wonder if I give it up, after all."

"Rot!" was her companion's amazed exclamation.

"I might. I won't answer for it. And it would be your fault."

Stricken with alarm, Dymes poured forth assurances of his good behaviour. He followed her down to the platform, and for a quarter of an hour she had to listen, in torment of mind and body, to remonstrances, flatteries, amorous blandishments, accompanied by the hiss of steam and roar of trains.

On reaching home she could do nothing but lie down in the dark. Her head ached intolerably; and hour after hour, as often happens when the brain is overwearied, a strain of music hummed incessantly on her ear, till inability to dismiss it made her cry in half-frenzied wretchedness.

With sleep she recovered; but through the next day, dull and idle, her thoughts kept such a gloomy colour that she well-nigh brought herself to the resolve with which she had threatened Felix Dymes. But for the anticipa-

> tion of Harvey's triumph, she might perhaps have done so.[29]

This passage is worth examining in some detail because in the scene the two human figures dramatize much of the decay of modern civilization in the forms of self-deception, misunderstanding, lack of meaningful social intercourse, sterile dilettantism, and cultural barbarism that lies at the heart of the novel. While other Gissing novels are as successful in their evocation of scene, and still others have as sure and complex characterization, in only one other--New Grub Street--does he manage so successfully to integrate the two. In no other novel is Gissing more surely in control of all his materials. As M. C. Donnelly remarks generally, and as this scene specifically and amply demonstrates, The Whirlpool is Gissing's best work in prose fiction.[30]

Amidst the hiss and roar of the trains and the general cacophony of activity in the station, the drama between Alma Rolfe and Felix Dymes is played out. The dissonance which almost drowns out the efforts at conversation between the two is suggestive of the ceaseless round of noisy and mechanical activity that characterizes London and the rest of European civilization at this time. In the frenzied search for personal popularity and material success, any attempts at trying to preserve some sense of human value and to maintain meaningful communication between friends, within a family circle, or among nations are seen as futile.

Gissing works with his usual effectiveness to establish London as the locus of whirlpool activity. Throughout the novel there is an insistence on the debilitating effects of life in London as lived by all classes, even on those of the lower aristocracy like Cyrus Redgrave. The oppressive quality of urban life is felt first in the descriptions of climatic conditions. The city is usually enveloped in a curtain of rain, shrouded by fog, or only faintly illuminated by a feeble sunlight. ("Rolfe put on his overcoat, and stepped out into the cold, clammy November night" [5].) Even when the sun shines, there is merely a pallid light which makes little impression on the uninspiring landscape, as shown in this description: "Next morning the weather was fine: that is to say, one could read without artificial light, and no rain fell, and far above the house-tops appeared a bluish glimmer, shot now and then with pale yellowness" (24-25). Much of the external action--particularly the physical violence in the form of three suicides and a murder--occurs at night. It is in this lugubrious atmosphere that the searches for personal and material success are pursued. The individuals engaged in these searches quickly find themselves caught in the grip of forces which they cannot control and which they only dimly understand. The milieu itself has a dynamism the forces of which subjugate all within its reach. Such forces prove initially to be spiritually debilitating and then physically destructive. Such men as Bennet Frothingham, whose very name suggests his inability to do more than ride the current of events by which he is carried to his doom, and Abbott, whose wife is the chief means although not the reason for his suicide, and Wager, whose flight from England constitutes an attempt to flee a sordid reality, are examples of those who get caught in the grip of the whirlpool's forces. Those like Carnaby and Leach who will not, or can not flee, are caught in a ceaseless round of mechanical drudgery which threatens ultimately to destroy them.

The ceaseless and threatening roar of urban life is extrapolated by Gissing to the national and international levels. If there are those like Alma Rolfe and Felix Dymes on the personal level who find something exhilarating in flirting with the forces of mechanical dynamism, there are also those who are exhilarated on the national and international levels by the jingoism and dreams of imperial glory given poetic sanction by Kipling and Swinburne. But, as Gissing makes it clear that London is the locus of the disintegration of the traditional values governing relations within families, between friends, or even the conduct of the individual life, so he also makes it clear that the same forces on the national and international levels will set European civilization on an irrevocable course of self-destruction. In effect, urban London and the whirlpool activities which characterize it at this time have been made an emblem of European civilization. As Rolfe says to Hugh Carnaby: "I feel as if we are all being swept into a ghastly whirlpool which roars over the bottomless pit" (44).

In obvious contrast to the mechanical destructiveness of urban life and all that it connotes, the novel posits the tranquillity of rural life as lived for a time by Alma, Rolfe, and Hughie in a country village in Wales, and by the Mortons at Greystone. In these locations the traditional values of family and community have been preserved by those whose powers of discernment have not been eroded. The salutary effect of the rural environment is seen in the quietly intellectual talks between Basil Morton and Rolfe, in the revivification of Mary Abbott's body and spirit when she visits the Rolfes in Wales, and in the lyrical descriptions of Greystone, which did much to preserve the "beauty and tranquillity of days gone by" (2). The climatic differences between the urban and rural environments--fog, rain, cold, and darkness on the one hand, and sun, warmth, and bracing wind on the other--are only the most obvious manifestations of the differences in the quality of life. The movement of Rolfe and his son off into the warmth of the evening sunshine at the novel's conclusion is evidence of Rolfe's successful disengagement from the forces of the whirlpool of London life and all that it connotes.

It is appropriate that the human figures in the Baker Street Station scene are Felix Dymes and Alma Rolfe. They are the "new" man and the "new" woman. Each is a child of the times, being moulded by contemporary events and yet, ironically, contributing by their very actions and attitudes to the web of circumstances which ultimately destroys the one and carries the other, inevitably in its grasp, ever onward, striving to achieve a new success, a slave to his own popularity.

Felix Dymes is the "new" man. An individual of some real talent in composing music, Dymes has put his talent to the service of popular taste, a service by which a writer is only as good as his next success. Dymes is therefore driven to achieve one success after another, ever haunted by the spectre of possible failure. Dymes' pecuniary success is inextricably bound up with his personal success in planning the careers and trying to manipulate the lives of his protégées. Using a potent combination of personal charm, sexual aggression, and an intimate knowledge of what it takes to succeed on the music hall stage, he has been remarkably successful in both spheres. Although he recognizes that Alma Rolfe is from a higher social class than his own, Dymes almost instinctively perceives Alma's insatiable need of flattery for her ego and excitement in her life, no matter what the source. With such a shrewd insight to her character and knowing that Alma recognizes his expertise in making preparations for her professional aspirations, Dymes is emboldened to take liberties with her, such as addressing her by her Christian name, holding her hand and inviting her to his rooms, liberties that normally would have been precluded by social constraints. Only in London, where the forces of modern life have tended to blur the power of discernment, is it possible for such as Dymes to proceed in this way. It seems clear that Dymes is as interested in furthering his conquests of upperclass women for the sake of his self-gratification as he is in furthering their professional aspirations. Yet Dymes does not dare to proceed too far too fast and is therefore somewhat at a loss as to how to deal to advantage with Alma's vacillating moods of lassitude and strong decision.

As scintillatingly individual as he is, however, Dymes, in many respects, is typical of those who get caught up in the whirlpool of the times. The cacophony and social and moral confusion of urban London is the matrix in which he has fashioned his successes, both personal and professional. Away from the debased taste for music and from the almost pathological need for continuing titillation that characterizes the urban environment, Dymes would be recognized for the huckster that he is. Even in the urban environment Dymes knows that he is a man on a treadmill, running ever faster just to maintain his present position. He must be able to satisfy the increasingly voracious appetite of his public or all will be lost. In a certain sense, Dymes is a man who elicits both grudging admiration and pity: on the one hand, he is clever enough to take advantage of the confusion of the times and turn that confusion of values to his financial advantage; on the other hand, he, too, is a victim of the same forces he tries to manipulate, and, as a victim, he is searching continuously for some sense of security but never finds it.

Gissing achieves a resonance in the figure of Dymes by showing others who are similarly, despite their pretensions and often self-deceptions of mastery, victims and near-victims of the forces rampant in their civilization. Cyrus Redgrave is an aristocratic version of Dymes' search for sexual conquest. His reputation as a roué is well established and the clandestine meetings with a succession of young society women at his suburban bungalow merely confirm it. Redgrave's life is one of _ennui_, lightened only by travel and the prospect of some new sexual conquest. The woman who is the object of that quest is, like Sibyl Carnaby, quickly relegated to a place in the photo album once the novelty has worn off. Dymes' never-ending search for material success and financial security is echoed in the efforts of Leach to provide his socially conscious daughters with what they think they need to maintain respectability. Although those around him come to realize in time the price that their social pretensions are exacting, Leach is nearly driven to an early death. The results of the enormous pressure to provide for the material and social aspirations of insensitive people are shown in their most extreme form in the suicides of Abbott and Frothingham. All of these figures--Dymes, Redgrave, Leach, Abbott and Frothingham--are under the delusion that they are in control of their lives, but all are caught in the vortex of a whirlpool whose horror can only be dimly perceived and from which there is no escape. All can be seen as victims.

If Dymes is the "new" man of the age, Alma Rolfe is the "new" woman, or she is the woman on whom the age seems to have conferred a new freedom. For modern minds woman is no longer to be merely wife and mother, no longer to be confined to hearth and home, no longer to conduct herself and her affairs exclusively in a manner which is consistent with her husband's wishes and the best interests of the family unit. Instead, she is to pursue her own course, to realize her own personal ambitions, to fulfill her own potential as a person, as an artist, or whatever she may wish. It is a freedom in which Alma Rolfe at first luxuriates and then suffocates. In the depiction of the career of Alma Rolfe from gay, brilliant debutante to drug-addicted suicide, Gissing provides a devastating portrait of what can happen when license is mistaken for freedom.

Harvey Rolfe first encounters Alma as a bright, attractive woman, the young daughter of the wealthy financier, Bennet Frothingham. The bond between them grows slowly but predictably. A series of friendly letters is followed by a series of meetings which, in turn, leads to a deepening relationship and eventually engagement and marriage. In the light of what later develops, it seems clear that the initial attraction between the two is almost wholly sexual. After marriage, they quickly discover that they have little else in common: where Rolfe is introverted and inclined to solitude, Alma is extroverted and gregarious; where Rolfe desires the peace and quiet of a rural setting close to nature with good books, good music, art and intelligent conversation, Alma needs the excitement of urban London with adoring sycophants, music halls and the meaningless triviality and glitter of the cocktail party. She is the true dilettante. With no real talent, but with a seemingly insatiable appetite for admiration and titillation, she flits from a socialite's life in London, to study in Germany, to painting in Wales, to music in London. Her continuing search for the gratification of her vanity is the female version of the male search for money and power. An indication of Alma's inability to be truly content with family, friends, and the virtues of the rural life is seen in the fact that, away from the adulation of her sycophantic admirers, she suffers.

> This month by the northern sea improved her health, but she had little enjoyment. After a few days, she wearied of the shore and moorland, and wished herself back at Gunnersbury. Nature had never made much appeal to her; when she spoke of its beauties with admiration, she echoed the approved phrases, little more; all her instincts drew towards the life of a great town. Sitting upon the sand, between cliff and breakers, she lost herself in a dream of thronged streets and brilliant rooms; the voice of the waves became the roar of traffic, a far sweeter music. With every year this tendency had grown stronger; she could only marvel, now, at the illusion which enabled her to live so long, all but contentedly, in that wilderness where Hughie was born. Rather than return to it, she would die--rather a thousand times.
>
> (338-39)

As it turns out, and as Alma well knows, there is no necessity for such theatrical melodrama, nor will she have to worry long about having to live a dull life in the country. In keeping with the tenor of the times, Rolfe decides to let his wife pursue her own course, to have the chance to live fully "out", as she emphasizes in an early conversation with him (37). But the pursuit of her own desires, unencumbered by any sense of responsibility to her husband or for her son, leads to a growing sense of estrangement in the marriage, a lack of interest in her role as mother, and a corresponding increase in the involvement with such unsavoury figures as Redgrave, Mrs. Strangeways, and Felix Dymes. Alma's participation in clandestine meetings, character assassination, and a murder leads directly to a dependence on drugs and eventually her suicide. This depiction of the breakdown of a marriage and the disintegration of a personality is done in masterful fashion. If it is true that Gissing the novelist went to school to the French naturalists, the depiction of the career of Alma Rolfe is proof that he learned his lessons well.

The secondary female figures do for Alma Rolfe what some of the minor male figures do for Felix Dymes. Gissing achieves a resonance in Alma's career by parallelling it with those of Sibyl Carnaby, Mary Abbott, and Mrs. Morton. Like Alma, Sibyl seems bent only on her own pleasure and, at least initially, is not at all concerned about the wishes of her husband or of anyone else. Like many another victim of the whirlpool's vortex, Sibyl wishes to maintain an ostentatious appearance for the sake of respectability no matter what the cost to others may be. Like Alma, Sibyl refuses to leave London and go to Australia or one of the other colonies, where a man like her husband, filled with animal energy, might find an outlet for it in action rather than having it vitiated by the enervating and trivial London social scene. As the Rolfes return from Wales, so the Carnabys, in a parallel move, return from the colonies, and for the same reason. Like Alma, Sibyl strives to inject even more excitement into her life by engaging in extramarital relations with the dangerous Redgrave, or so her photo in the infamous album suggests. However, unlike Alma, Sibyl does stand by and believe in her husband when he tells her the story of the events of the night he killed Redgrave. Sibyl's faith in this instance contrasts sharply with Alma's inability to believe in Rolfe when he tells her that there is nothing between himself and Mary Abbott and nothing other than a financial connection between himself and the Wager children. At the novel's conclusion, the Carnabys, through their vicissitudes, have been drawn closer together and are busy assembling the pieces of a new relationship to each other based on mutual love and understanding, while Alma is a drug-induced suicide.

Alma is also contrasted effectively with Mary Abbott, especially with respect to the care of children, one of Gissing's chief devices in this novel to measure the extent of human concern and commitment. At first, Mary Abbott is not a sympathetic figure. Like Sibyl and Alma, she wishes only to maintain a proud, expensive and respectable social profile. The means of accomplishing this she leaves in the hands of her too-harried husband. Eventually, the pressure of trying to meet those demands and to assume the added financial responsibility for the Wager children proves to be too great for Abbott, and he commits suicide. It is at this point that Mary Abbott begins her journey to a new sense of humility and responsibility for others. In order to support herself and the Wager children, she drops her false sense of social superiority, opens a school for small children, and begins to cultivate a sense of self-respect. In her struggle for self-knowledge, she turns increasingly to the sympathetic Harvey Rolfe. In turn, when he wishes to talk about his son, it is Mary Abbott to whom he speaks rather than his wife. As Mary Abbott leans more and more on Rolfe's strength and wisdom, and benefits from them, Alma turns away, with disastrous results.

The supreme embodiment of wife and mother in this novel is Basil Morton's wife. In these functions she provides the most effective contrast to Alma. Unlike Alma, who has an obsessive need for bright lights, society, and all that goes with the social swirl of life in a large urban centre, Mrs. Morton is more than content to find the essence of her fulfillment in the happiness and well-being of her husband and children.

> Mrs. Morton had the beauty of perfect health, of health mental and physical. To describe her face as homely was to pay it the highest compliment, for its smile was the true light of home, that never failed. _Filia generosi_, daughter of a house that bred gentlewomen, though its ability to dower them had declined in these latter days, she conceived her duty as wife and mother after the old fashion, and was so fortunate as to find no obstacle in circumstance. She rose early; she slept early; and her day was full of manifold activity. Four children had she borne--the eldest a boy now in his twelfth year, the youngest a baby girl; and it seemed to her no merit that in these little ones she saw the end and reason of her being. Into her pure and healthy mind had never entered a thought at conflict with motherhood. Her breasts were the fountain of life; her babies clung to them, and grew large of limb. From her they learnt the names of trees and flowers and all things beautiful around them; learnt too, less by precept than from fair example, the sweetness and sincerity wherewith such mothers and such alone, can endow their offspring. Later she was their instructress in a more formal sense; for this also she held to be her duty, up to the point where other teaching became needful. By method and goodwill she found time for everything, ruling her house and ordering her life so admirably, that to those who saw her only in hours of leisure she seemed to be at leisure always. She would have felt it an impossible thing to abandon her children to the care of servants; reluctantly she left them for an hour or two when other claims which could not be neglected called her forth. In playtime they desired no better companion, for she was a child herself in gaiety of heart and lissom sportiveness. No prettier sight could be seen at Greystone than when they all drove in a pony carriage to call on friends, or out into the country. Nowadays it was often her eldest boy who held the reins, a bright-eyed, well-built lad, a pupil at the old Grammar School, where he used the desk at which his father had sat before him. Whatever fault of boyhood showed itself in Harry Morton, he knew not the common temptation to be ashamed of his mother or to flout her love.
> (303-04)

Clearly, Mrs. Morton is _The Whirlpool's_ embodiment of the ideal Victorian wife and mother. In her attitudes toward her children and life, she is in startling contrast to Alma. While the Morton children are basking in the warmth of their mother's love and concern, Hughie Rolfe is entrusted to the care of a succession of servant girls who see in the child only an opportunity to make money. While Mrs. Morton is content to locate the essence of her being and life in service to her family, Alma makes her family subservient to the pursuit of her own selfish interests. The contrast between the cheerful attitude and healthy mind of Mrs. Morton and the darkening prospect of a nervous breakdown for Alma Rolfe makes the point in the starkest terms.

In contrast to Dymes, the "new" man, and Alma, the "new" woman, stands Harvey Rolfe. Rolfe's uncommon sensibility, his inclination toward solitude, his love of good books, rationality, and a quiet country life are enough to establish him quickly as the familiar Gissing hero. After beginning life in promising circumstances, Rolfe was obliged to work at a menial job to support himself. Having been freed from this by a bequest, he spends his time pretty much as he likes. He likes to see the world and to visit places which he had previously only read about, to indulge his eclectic reading tastes, and between trips to sequester himself in a none-too-tidy London flat, "cared for" by an incompetent housekeeper. With his independence he can adopt a detached and wry view of the marital misadventures of his landlord, Buncombe, take a bemused attitude toward the romantic yearnings of young Cecil Morphew, and hold with Bacon that any man with wife and children gives hostages to fortune.

> . . . all domestic matters were a trial to his nerves. It seemed to him an act of unaccountable folly to marry a woman from whom one differed diametrically on subjects that lay at the root of life; and of children he could hardly bring himself to think at all, so exasperating the complication they introduced into social problems which defied common sense. He disliked children; fled the sight and sound of them in most cases, and, when this was not possible, regarded them with apprehension, anxiety, weariness, anything but interest. In the perplexity that had come upon him, Basil Morton seemed to have nothing more than his deserts. "Best of mothers and of wives," forsooth! An excellent housekeeper no doubt, but what shadow of qualification for wifehood and motherhood in this year 1886? The whole question was disgusting to a rational man--especially to that vigorous example of the class, by name Harvey Rolfe.
> (19)

Thus, when the novel opens, Harvey Rolfe is, and has been for some few years, very much a spectator of the lives of others, and of life in general. But his growing involvement in the affairs of Cecil Morphew, his assumption of financial responsibility for the abandoned Wager children, his role as advisor to Mary Abbott after her husband's suicide, and, above all, his growing involvement with Alma Frothingham provide the means whereby even the reluctant Rolfe is drawn toward the vortex of the whirlpool. As a consequence of his being drawn into the whirlpool, Rolfe's views on marriage, children, education, and life in general undergo considerable alteration. From seeing marriage as only for the weak and foolish (19), Rolfe comes to regard Morton as "the happiest man I know, or ever shall know" (322); from seeing life as essentially a conflict between the strong forces and the weak, with the weak being weeded out in keeping with natural evolutionary principles (42), he comes to see it as an arena where a man is tested for his principles and where he is likely to be strong, unfeeling and successful at the expense of his humanity (320-21); from seeing children as nuisances (19), he feels himself living again in the experiences of his son.

> Then came a thought of joy. The keen sensations which he himself had lost were his child's inheritance. Somewhere in the fields, this summer morning, Hughie was delighting in the scent, the touch, of earth, young amid a world where all was new. The stereotyped phrase about parents living again in their children became a reality and a source of deep content. So does a man repeat the experiences of the race, and with each step onward live into the meaning of some old word that he has but idly echoed.
>
> (323)

Clearly, there has been a considerable progression in Rolfe's perceptions of life in general and in a number of specific areas of life.

This progression is aided chiefly by Rolfe's disintegrating marriage. Despite the fact that in his completely rational moments he is perfectly aware of what it is that motivates Alma (38), even to the theatricality of her name (36), Rolfe persists in marrying her. The marriage is doomed from the start. He has no liking for Alma's desire for a continuous round of social gatherings. For her part, Alma cannot be long from the society of those who will provide the kind of sycophancy that she craves. With this basic difference at the outset--reflected externally in the couple's inability to decide where to live and only partially solved by a series of rented suburban houses--it is only a matter of time before some of the infinitely more important issues such as the role of wife and mother, child care, and education prove to be too great for this marriage to handle. The growing estrangement is marked by a series of cleverly graduated steps, each more serious in its import. Since Alma cannot get the unalloyed admiration she craves from her husband and his limited circle of friends, she begins to associate with those, such as Dymes and Mrs. Strangeways, who will, for their own purposes, curry her favour. Since she knows that Rolfe would not approve of her association with such people, it is an easy step for her to begin to practise deception by deliberately omitting details of where she has been and with whom she has been in company. She later moves from the sins of omission to the sins of commission and begins to lie as to her whereabouts and her company. Capable of deception herself, she begins to imagine deception on the part of others and postulates that Rolfe is unacknowledged father of the Wager children. In an attempt to confirm her suspicions, she begins to open her husband's post (235). As Alma comes more and more to regard her husband as an adversary, and her son as little more than a hindrance to her social activities, she becomes more and more dependent on Dymes and Mrs. Strangeways. That is, Alma moves away more and more from the traditional values of the family and moves closer and closer to the frenetic existence of those whose only values are those of personal aggrandizement and material success.

For his part, Rolfe decides on principle to allow his wife to pursue her interests because he is convinced that she has enough sense to discern the true from the false and does not need to be monitored like a child. However, because of her attitude toward children, he feels that he cannot tell her about his reasons for helping the Wager children. He then discovers to his dismay that she has no real concern even for Hughie, since she is quite prepared to allow the boy to be raised by a succession of housekeepers. As he watches his wife move further and further away from him and the things that he values, Rolfe contrasts his unhappy situation with the marital bliss of Basil Morton. Equally clear is the similarity of the situations of Rolfe and Cecil Morphew. As Henrietta Winter does not correspond to Morphew's perception of her (375), so Rolfe is bitterly disappointed with the sort of woman and wife that Alma turns out to be. As Alma engages in her lies and deceptions (193), it becomes clear to Rolfe that their relationship is in the process of disintegration and he thinks ruefully of the situation of his London landlord, Buncombe, and of his release from marriage through divorce (193). In each instance, some parallel in the situations of the others reminds Rolfe of his own case.

Like the careers of Sue Bridehead and Jude Fawley in Hardy's Jude The Obscure, the careers of Alma Rolfe and Rolfe can be seen as being in counterpoint. At the outset, Alma is already caught in the currents of the whirlpool of modern life. Through marriage to Rolfe she is removed from the swift current to the more quiet eddies, but she is not content. Slowly at first, but then with ever increasing speed she is drawn back into the dangerous currents and finally, having abandoned herself completely to its force, is destroyed by the whirlpool. Rolfe, on the other hand, is at the outset merely a bemused spectator to the whirlpool existence of others. But he is increasingly drawn into the main currents by his various commitments to others. At the end of the novel he is able to remove himself and his son from the vortex of the malignant forces which destroyed his wife. In the final view, Rolfe's cultural and social ideals are seen to be anachronisms in modern life. Even Rolfe realizes how far removed he is from the rest of his civilization by his views (421). But the content that he has achieved leaves no doubt that he has no regrets for the course that he has chosen for himself and his son. Such a course is seen in the starkest contrast to that chosen by the "new" man, Felix Dymes.

Misunderstanding plays a major role in the Baker Street Station scene and in the novel as a whole. In scene and novel misunderstanding takes on the forms of the inability of individuals to understand each other and the inability of the individual to understand himself. In both cases, the chief lack is that of a commonly held set of values which individuals and society seek to perpetuate as a touchstone of moral conduct. Instead, there has been a homogenization of values and of social class, and the traditional values which previously served to govern social relationships and moral conduct are seen to be outmoded. In the final analysis, in the "freer" atmosphere of the modern world each individual is left to determine his own values. As _The Whirlpool_ makes clear, however, the determination of his own values by each person tends to mean merely that each individual is that much more isolated from the rest of society.

In the railway station scene, Alma and Dymes are each exercised to think that the other has taken unilateral action. For Dymes it is unthinkable that Alma should have acted on her own. He is the one with the expertise in such matters as these, and he is the one who is determined to run the professional if not the personal lives of his protégées. The fact that Alma seems to have acted on her own is just proof to him of the high-handedness of the women of her class. But he is determined to have his way with her as he has always had his way with similar women in the past. Her apparent vacillation he sees only as flirtation, and he is convinced in view of the way that things seem to be turning out that the usually reliable weapons of cajolery, flattery, threats, and male aggression can be depended upon to effect their usual results, both personal and professional. It never occurs to him that Alma may be very differently motivated.

For her part Alma is blinded by her delusions of grandeur. She succeeds in convincing herself that she has genuine talent, and that she wants to serve the public with that talent. From this point of view, she sees Dymes as the means by which that talent can be exposed to the greatest advantage. She seems blind to the fact that what she really wants is public adulation and that the music is just a means to that end. Furthermore, while she has only contempt for what Dymes is socially, she is nevertheless susceptible to his flattery and encourages his frank admiration of her as a woman. She is naive enough to believe that Dymes will be content to conduct his admiration of her from afar. Her encouragement of Dymes' advances can be seen in her ineffectual resistance to the liberties he takes in the carriage. Alma's last-second resistance to proceeding to Dymes' rooms only makes more mysterious and tantalizing her real state of mind. In view of her entire relationship with him, Alma's relief when Dymes is finally paid off by Rolfe can only be seen as an indication of her lack of understanding of herself and of what she really wants.

The misunderstanding between Alma and Dymes is echoed throughout the novel as a whole. These misunderstandings cover the range from the rather comic inability of Rolfe to arrive at some sort of satisfactory arrangement with his charwoman, through the more serious inability of the Leach family to understand what price it is that they are paying for their social respectability, to the tragic inability of Alma and Rolfe to arrive at a sense of common enterprise in their marriage. In more abstract terms at the national and international levels, misunderstanding among nations is seen as leading to the direst political and military consequences (420-21).

On the personal level, the most serious misunderstanding takes the form of the inability to know the self. In this instance the most tragic example is Alma Rolfe. Alma's desperate need for flattery and the admiration of others drives her to courses of action and associations with people that would normally have been unthinkable. For each questionable course of action, for each association with disreputable characters, there is a rationalization. Alma's inability to determine what she wants and who she is can be seen in her flirtation with Dymes in the station scene and in the whole of her relationship with Cyrus Redgrave. Having rejected Redgrave's offer to be his mistress (80), having gone through the dangers of trying to secure his financial assistance for her professional debut while still keeping him at arm's length, having gone through the nightmarish events of the night of his murder by Carnaby, Alma is still able to fantasize what life might have held for her had she accepted the original offer.

> What if she had gone to Riva? Suddenly, and for the first time, she saw it as a thing that might have happened; not as a mere dark suggestion abhorrent to her thought. Had she known the world a little better, it might have been. Then, how different her life! Pleasure, luxury, triumph; for she had proved herself capable of triumphing. He, the man of money and influence, would have made it his pride to smooth the way for her. And perhaps never a word against her reputation; or, if whispers, did she not know by this time how indulgent society can be to its brilliant favourites?
>
> (392)

Alma's inability to understand Harvey Rolfe and what he stands for is revealed in the fullest measure in her misconception that his happiness is predicated on her professional success. But it is her inability to understand herself and to know what it is that she herself really wants that is the most tragic aspect of all for Alma. She falls a victim, like many another, to the whirlpool partially because of her own delusions and misconceptions.

The problem of misunderstanding and how it grows is made dramatically clear in the railway station scene by the verbal exchange after Alma and Dymes have left Mrs. Littlestone's. The two do not speak at all until they have turned into a "quiet street." When they finally do speak, Dymes, unexpectedly, seems prepared to accept Alma's plea of innocence about the mysterious advertisement. With this issue settled and having other plans in mind, Dymes then suggests that they repair to his rooms for further discussion.

Alma's token resistance is expected, is taken as appropriate encouragement, and very quickly Dymes bundles her into a cab and they head for his flat. During the cab ride Dymes pursues his advantage and takes further liberties. Alma's continuing but ineffectual resistance is taken for further encouragement. However, Alma's sudden resolve not to proceed is translated into effective action as the cab nears the flat. They then proceed to the station, and the remainder of the scene is played out there. By this point, Dymes is completely mystified as to Alma's real desires and he is at a loss as to how to handle her quirks of temperament. The words, phrases and half-sentences that he speaks "inarticulately" with their broken, uneven, staccato rhythms reflect something of this confusion. Trying desperately to re-kindle her flagging interest lest he lose his advantage, Dymes turns on the full flood of his considerable talent, and speaks his "remonstrances, flatteries, [and] amorous blandishments, accompanied by the hiss of steam and the roar of trains." The movement of the dialogue from reasonable articulateness in relative quiet to half-sentences trailing off into meaninglessness and emotional titillation amid the cacophony of a great city, and of the action, from the unexceptionable relations between two people whose only connection is a business enterprise to the physical and verbal blandishments of two "new" citizens engaging in a sterile flirtation which can only be destructive, is a finely crafted Gissing emblem of what he perceived happening to his civilization and to the people in it. Analogous scenes in such novels as In The Year of Jubilee (309) and New Grub Street (26-27) show that Gissing was pre-occupied with the mechanization and de-humanization of his society. In such a mechanical world, as all these scenes show, the traditional values governing the relations between people, classes and nations are drowned out in the name of progress. The parameters of morality, formerly established, understood and held by all, have become blurred. The result is chaos on both the social and individual levels, reflected in the scene in The Whirlpool by the movement of dialogue and action alike.

The scene, although almost fully dramatized, is carefully controlled by the narrator. Phrases and words such as "useless resistance", "muttering inarticulately", "violently", "impulsively", "intolerably", and "bewildered look" serve not only to characterize Dymes' confusion, but also to maintain the reader's distance from the action and the characters. This objectively created context is necessary so that the reader will not identify too closely with Alma, and thereby lose much of the irony in the scene. While in quantitative terms the objective commentary is slight, it is telling enough in its impact that Gissing is able to dramatize the situations of his characters without sacrificing the necessary objectivity. The mistake of such novels as Born in Exile of having the reader identify too closely with the judgments of the chief figures and thereby of losing the sense of an objectively realized context is not repeated here.

As two recent editors, Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge, have pointed out, no previous work by Gissing had attracted so much critical attention.[31] The reactions of contemporary critics range from the generally condemnatory reviews found in the Morning Post, Sketch, and Guardian, to the lukewarm remarks of The Nation, and The New York Times, to the enthusiastic comments of Greenough White in The Sewanee Review and H. G. Wells in The Contemporary Review.[32] On the whole it seems that many contemporary readers and critics tended to agree with the impressions of Henry-D Davray, who, in Mercure de France, wrote: "The Whirlpool est un livre considérable, où s'affirme un effort énorme, un grand talent, et une puissante valeur d'écrivain."[33]

More recent critical response has ranged from Frank Swinnerton's generally deprecatory remarks, to the cautious approval of Jacob Korg, to the more laudatory comments of M. C. Donnelly. Even if due allowance is made for such criticisms as incompatibility of title and content, tiredness, ennui, and lack of fictive reality of some of the characters, it is difficult not to agree with Donnelly when she writes: "The Whirlpool is Gissing's most accomplished performance in the long novel."[34]

The reason that The Whirlpool is so satisfying is that Gissing finally demonstrates his full control over the various structural elements to the extent that the novel is fully informed with meaning.[35] Although the novel has many characters--it is after all a depiction of the state of an entire society--the chief focus is on a small group of people. Within that select group, the principal focus falls on Alma and Harvey Rolfe. Alma's character and situation are thrown into sharp relief by the characters and situations of Sibyl Carnaby, Mary Abbott and Mrs. Morton. But, while these characters have a convincing fictive reality about them, they exist primarily to focus more intensely the character of Alma Rolfe. The secondary figures are appropriately subordinated, and the depiction of the decline of Alma is a tribute to Gissing's hardwon craftsmanship in the matter of complex and convincing characterization, wherein the decline is shown to be as much a matter of psychological conflict as it is the influence of the external environment.

Similarly, the figures of Cecil Morphew, Hugh Carnaby, to a lesser extent Buncombe, and, above all, Felix Dymes, are designed to throw the figure of Harvey Rolfe into sharp relief. Although it is clear that Rolfe has many things in common with some of his fictive predecessors, and possibly with Gissing as well, it is equally clear that he has a complex fictive personality of his own. He is seen as a man who in his beliefs is out of step with the prevailing trends. Rather than trying to take advantage of the forces which have run rampant as a result of the decline in traditional values, Rolfe deliberately chooses a way of life which reflects his concern for quality rather than quantity. Rolfe refuses to believe that technological progress and social and cultural progress have any necessary connection. But the novel makes no special pleas for Rolfe's position. Indeed, Rolfe himself is fully aware of the disadvantages facing himself and his son as a result of his choosing the cultivation of traditional values. But his taking such a position is seen to be an act of courage, not one of cowardice or ignorance. Again the use of a number of minor but nevertheless indispensable figures reveals more intensively the conflicts of the central character.

In addition, Gissing has carefully and adeptly handled the various narrative threads. Along with individuals, the novel provides some relevant detail of the histories of several families, including those of Buncombe, the Carnabys, Redgrave, Mrs. Lant (Maskell), Morphew, Henrietta Winter, and the Mortons. But, again, the principal focus is on the Rolfes. Each of the other narratives, although contributing something to the cause of a well populated novel, is really only important insofar as it illuminates by comparison or contrast some aspect of the Rolfe family narrative. With, by this stage, a finely tuned sense of proportion and subordination Gissing does not repeat the mistakes of the novels of the eighties which are marked by their plethora of narrative threads, each seeming to exist in its own right and the whole tied together only by the most obvious and contrived devices. Here, even in the midst of the most seemingly melodramatic devices, such as Redgrave's murder, the novel provides genuinely convincing motivation so that each act and each result are tied together in a causal sequence which in context is convincing.

In the use of his narrator as a neutral omniscience, Gissing demonstrates a well modulated control over the material. In The Whirlpool, while a good deal of the conflict is dramatized in the minds of the principal characters, the largely unobtrusive comments of the objective narrator provide an artistically created and carefully sustained context in which the actions and inner conflicts of the characters can be seen and evaluated. Here there is no sense of an editorial omniscience balancing pasteboard figures and pitiable narratives to establish some theory about life and its conduct, such as mark the novels of the first phase. On the other hand, there is no repetition of the mistake made in some of the second phase novels when the intensity of the inner process is allowed to result in a critical loss of distance, thereby losing the objective context by which a particular character's thoughts and actions might be evaluated. In The Whirlpool the action proceeds as a result of the conflicts of the characters, but the reader is always aware of an objectively created context in which the conflict is occurring.

Carefully maintained control over complex but credible character creation, clarity and plausibility of narrative line, carefully created and deftly sustained narrative presence all indicate that Gissing had mastered his art. Because he had, The Whirlpool constitutes in the realization of the full potential of its form perhaps his finest artistic achievement. As Harvey Rolfe leaves the noise, confusion and shadow of industrial London to emerge into the quiet sunshine of Greystone, so George Gissing the novelist, with The Whirlpool, emerged into the sunshine of solid if not great fictional achievement.

Conclusion

In the concluding pages of what has been referred to as his "acidulous study"[1] of George Gissing, Frank Swinnerton writes:

> . . . while he built several elaborate structures--none more so than Demos or The Whirlpool--he [Gissing] was Victorian in his notions of construction. Many threads go to make up most of his books, threads interwoven with, for the most part, sincere regard for not improper interrelation. In the control of these threads, he was completely sure and capable: even when his main erections caved in for want of the support of experience he preserved his sense of proportion. That, in any writer, would be a feat of strength. In Gissing the historical sense was very strong; and that may account for the manner of his control. Intricacies of scheme everywhere delight the reader who can perceive them. But the method which involves a large scheme, embracing a section of life, carries with it a particular defect that is very hard to overcome. It gives the appearance of too greatly diffused interest. Only a novelist with very strong constructive or imaginative power can overcome the defect; and Gissing was too absorbed in care to develop the one or the other.[2]

The comment is somewhat inaccurate and is therefore dangerously misleading. Swinnerton's remarks--despite the reference to The Whirlpool--seem most applicable to a specific aspect of the first phase novels, and, even more serious, seem to preclude absolutely any notion of progression or development in Gissing's art from first novel to last. Unfortunately, for Gissing's reputation, a number of other critics have contented themselves by adopting a similar position.[3] The result has often been a grossly over-simplified view of Gissing's novels and of his approach to the novel as art. Even in the criticisms where a progression or development is admitted, the credit seems to be given grudgingly, as when Jacob Korg admits that Gissing did develop a competence in handling the rudiments of fiction.[4] The fundamental point is that between 1880 and 1900 Gissing's art did develop significantly, a fact which has not been sufficiently recognized by Gissing's critics past or present.

At the time when Gissing began to write novels, the tradition of the three volume novel with all its paraphernalia held sway. Initially trying to write novels which reflect this tradition, Gissing's early efforts seem to justify Q. D. Leavis' contention that "Gissing is an example of how disastrous it may be for a writer whose talent is not of the first order to be born into a bad tradition."[5] More specifically, Jacob Korg provides some indication of the unfortunate results when Gissing took as his example George Eliot.[6] Gissing's early novels are characterized by their repletion of characters, narrative threads, lengthy descriptions, and the comments, sermons, expostulations, and interruptions of the ubiquitous narrator which do not always fulfill their intended purpose. The net effect, in almost all of the novels written in the eighties, if not outright artistic incoherence, is diffusion of interest. In only one of these novels does Gissing's normally unwieldy vehicle succeed in fulfilling the potential of its form.

But in these early novels Gissing was serving his apprenticeship in the craft of fiction, and, in the novels of the second phase, he shows that he learned some of the lessons well. The combination of a changed world view, an increasing interest in the field of psychology, and, most significant of all, changing ideas about the craft of fiction itself led him to structural changes in his novels based to a great extent on the psychological processes of his characters. Such an orientation to his material, evident in vestigial form in such early novels as Isabel Clarendon and A Life's Morning, led him almost of necessity to an appropriate subordination of characters and narrative threads, and to the creation of more convincingly complex characterizations. By emphasizing inner process, the lengthy biographies provided for virtually every character of the early novels were substantially reduced, and the development of character itself made more dramatic. But in Gissing's handling of the technique, a too close rendering of inner process is often tantamount to a critical loss of distance, and the virtual disappearance of the narrator at crucial points means that the reader's source of reliable information has been removed. Furthermore, while the technique of inner process leads Gissing to reduce substantially the number of characters on whom the focus is fixed, it also seduces him into the old mistake of sometimes losing sight of where the novel is going.

In the novels of the third phase, Gissing consolidated the gains he had made in the novels of the first two phases of his career. In the final phase, he still depicts inner process but, at the same time, he shows this taking place in an objectively created and carefully sustained context and not just within the purview of the flawed speculations of a fictive figure. Furthermore, all takes place under the aegis of a narrator whose well established distance from the characters and the action seems to guarantee the reliability of his view. The result in all cases is at the very least a technical competence and, in two instances, a superb handling of structural elements that allows each novel to fulfill the potential of its form.

That this sort of progression took place there can surely be no doubt. But the progression was not linear in the sense that arbitrary dates can be assigned to distinguish absolutely the end of one phase and the beginning of another. As with most artists, Gissing's development proceeded by trial and error, with second phase novels such as The Odd Women and Denzil Quarrier both following New Grub Street, a novel of the third phase and one of Gissing's artistic triumphs. It should also be noted that in the novels of the first phase which he revised for reprinting in the nineties, Gissing's emendations do not, as Joseph Wolff points out, affect their basic structure.[7] As M. C. Donnelly so aptly puts it: "The useful question to ask of Gissing's work is not 'What year?' but 'What design?'"[8]

Recognized toward the end of the nineteenth century as one of Britain's foremost living novelists, Gissing's struggle for mastery of his art went virtually unnoticed and unappreciated. Yet the evidence supplied by the novels themselves and by the letters to his various correspondents suggests that such a struggle by a self-conscious artist was taking place. Furthermore, not only was the struggle taking place, it was being won if not by great genius then by the lessons of experience and dogged determination. It cannot be claimed for George Gissing that he is a novelist of the first rank. None of his novels can be said to be great in the way that War and Peace, Madame Bovary, and Middlemarch are great, although some of his novels can be said to contain greatness. But these novels are more than merely fictional redactions of their author's life's experiences. Furthermore, they are more than merely exercises in the history of ideas. The best of them will sustain analysis on the basis of their considerable artistic merit and this, after all, is just what Gissing the artist was trying to achieve and what he wished for them.

Notes

Introduction

[1] "The Resuscitation of George Gissing," *Times Literary Supplement*, 11 June 1970, 630.

[2] Pierre Coustillas and John Spiers, *The Rediscovery of George Gissing* (London: The National Book League, 1971).

[3] Jacob Korg, *George Gissing, A Critical Biography* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), 201.

[4] Joseph Wolff, ed., *George Gissing: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings About Him, 1880-1970* (DeKalb, Illinois: Northern Illinois University Press, 1974).

[5] *The Gissing Newsletter*, ed. Pierre Coustillas (Lille, France, 1965).

[6] Coustillas and Spiers, 8.

[7] Edward Clodd, *Memories* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1916), 165-95; H. G. Wells, *An Experiment in Autobiography* (New York: Macmillan, 1934), 481-95.

[8] Virginia Woolf, "George Gissing," *The Common Reader*, 2nd Ser. (London: Hogarth Press, 1932), 220-25.

[9] Jacob Korg, "Review of *George Gissing, Grave Comedian*," by M. C. Donnelly in *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 2 (September, 1954), 146-49.

[10] Samuel Gapp, *George Gissing, Classicist* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1936). See also: Walter Neuschaffer, *Dostojewsky's Einfluss auf den Englischen Roman* (Heidelberg: Anglistiche Forschungen, 1935); and Oswald Davis, *George Gissing, A Study in Literary Leanings* (Folcroft: Folcroft Press, 1966).

[11] Gerhard Hassler, *Die Darstellung der Frau bei George Gissing* (Greiftswaldin: n.p., 1938). See also Anton Weber, *George Gissing Und Die Soziale Frage* (Leipzig: Tauchnitz, 1932).

[12] Sherif Nur, "The Art and Thought of George Gissing," Diss. University of London, 1950; Raymond Malbone, "George Gissing, Novelist," Diss. University of Minnesota, 1959; J. A. Rogers, "The Art and Challenge of George Gissing," Diss. New York University, 1968. These dissertations, although not primarily concerned with biographical issues, have surprisingly little to say about the novels as novels.

[13] Korg, in noting what little Donnelly does say about Gissing's art, writes: ". . . Dr. Donnelly, pursuing the thesis that Gissing learned to adapt himself to the change in fictional styles that took place in his time, limits her critical observations to matters of craftsmanship. It is impossible to do justice to Gissing on these terms, for as Dr. Donnelly points out, his importance rests on the fact that he was a novelist of ideas. He learned to handle plot, character, description and the other elements of fiction soundly; but he never learned to handle them superlatively. Even the best of his novels is only of routine esthetic interest." Korg, "Review of *George Gissing, Grave Comedian*," by M. C. Donnelly, in *Nineteenth Century Fiction*, 2 (September, 1954), 147.

[14] George Gissing, "The New Censorship of Literature," *Pall Mall Gazette*, XL (15 December 1884), 2; "Why I Don't Write Plays," *Pall Mall Gazette*, LV (10 September 1892), 3; "The Place of Realism in Fiction," *Humanitarian*, VII (1895), 14-16; rptd., in *Selections Autobiographical and Imaginative From the Works of George Gissing*, ed. A. C. Gissing (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 217-21; *Charles Dickens, A Critical Study* (London: Blackie, 1898).

[15] Letter to Algernon Gissing, 18 July 1883, in *Letters of George Gissing to Members of His Family*, ed. A. Gissing (London: Constable, 1927), 128-29. Hereafter cited as *Letters to Family*.

[16] Letter to Ellen Gissing, 14 May 1887, *Letters to Family*, 193.

[17] *Ibid.*, 283.

[18] Letter to Eduard Bertz, 16 February 1892, in *The Letters of George Gissing to Eduard Bertz*, ed. A. C. Young

(London: Constable, 1961), 145. Hereafter cited as Letters to Bertz.

[19] See, for example, M. C. Donnelly, George Gissing, Grave Comedian (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1954), 71; and Jacob Korg, George Gissing, A Critical Biography, 64.

[20] George Gissing, The Unclassed, 3 vols. (London: Chapman and Hall, 1884), III, 6.

[21] Gissing seems throughout his writings to use the terms interchangeably. A term used synonymously in the late Victorian period is "architecture," or "architectonics." See Kenneth Graham, English Criticism of the Novel, 1865-1900 (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 112-121; and Richard Stang, The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850-1870 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959), 111-27.

[22] Morley Roberts, "George Gissing," Queen's Quarterly, 37 (Autumn, 1930), 617-32; W. C. Frierson, "The Reaction Against Dickens: George Gissing," The English Novel in Transition, 1885-1940 (New York: Cooper Square Press, 1965), 101-06.

[23] Letter to Ellen Gissing, 22 November 1885, Letters to Family, 174.

[24] Letter to Margaret Gissing, 28 April 1886, Letters to Family, 179.

[25] Letters to Bertz, 148-49.

[26] H. G. Wells, "The Novels of Mr. George Gissing," Contemporary Review (August, 1897), 192-201.

[27] Letter to H. G. Wells, 7 August 1897, in George Gissing and H. G. Wells, Their Friendship and Correspondence, ed. R. A. Gettman (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1961), 47.

Chapter I

Prolegomenon

1. Materials and Themes

[1] Donald D. Stone, *Novelists in a Changing World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972), 67.

[2] A position as governess was not always synonymous with social dignity. Even in *A Life's Morning*, for example, after Emily releases Wilfrid from his offer of marriage, her return to her life as a governess is seen as a retrogressive social step and therefore as sacrificial. A cogent recent study of the governess in the Victorian social structure is that by M. Jeanne Peterson, "The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society," in *Suffer and Be Still*, ed. Martha Vicinus (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1973), 3-19.

[3] The economic factor is only one of a number cited by such authorities as Walter E. Houghton, E. M. Sigsworth, and T. J. Wyke. See Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957), 366; and E. M. Sigsworth and T. J. Wyke, "A Study of Victorian Prostitution and Venereal Disease," in *Suffer and Be Still*, ed., Martha Vicinus, 77-99.

[4] Among the prominent women cited by Houghton as sharing this conviction were George Eliot, Beatrice Webb, Mrs. Humphry Ward, and Mrs. Lynn Linton. See Walter E. Houghton, *The Victorian Frame of Mind, 1830-1870*, 352 and 352 n.32.

[5] E. Christine Houde, "Feminine Portraiture in *Born in Exile*," *The Gissing Newsletter*, VIII (October, 1972), 9.

[6] Ruskin, in his essay in such passages as: "The woman, we say, is not to guide, nor even to think, for herself. The man is always to be the wiser; he is to be the thinker, the ruler, the superior in knowledge and discretion, as in power" and: "She [the woman] must be enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise--wise, not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fail from his side: wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride, but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable, because infinitely

applicable, modesty of service--the true changefulness of woman. In that great sense--'La donna è mobile,' not 'Qual pium al vento;' no, nor yet 'Variable as the shade, by the light quivering aspen made;' but variable as the *light*, manifold in fair and serene division, that it may take the color of all that it falls upon, and exalt it . . ." suggests, if not the idealization--indeed etherealization of Patmore's *Angel in the House*--at least the well defined position of woman as helpmate and inferior partner for her husband that Ruskin thought was desirable. See John Ruskin, "Of Queens' Gardens," *Sesame and Lilies* (Toronto: W. J. Gage & Co., 1890), 97 and 103.

[7] Jacob Korg, *George Gissing, A Critical Biography*, 186.

[8] George Gissing, *The Unclassed*, II, 104.

[9] *Letters to Bertz*, 171.

[10] Korg, 105.

[11] John Ruskin, quoted in Holbrook Jackson, *Dreamers of Dreams* (London: Faber and Faber, 1948), 97.

[12] George Gissing, *The Whirlpool* (New York: Stokes, 1897; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), 320.

[13] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1961), 37.

[14] George Gissing, *A Life's Morning*, 3 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1888; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), I, 49.

[15] John Ruskin, "Of Queens' Gardens," *Sesame and Lilies* (Toronto: W. J. Gage, 1890).

[16] May Yates, *George Gissing, An Appreciation* (Manchester: University of Manchester Press, 1922), 18.

[17] George Gissing, *The Whirlpool*, 320.

[18] George Gissing, *The Unclassed*, I, 289.

[19] Walter Allen, *The English Novel* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1960), 291.

[20] Richard Altick, *The English Common Reader* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 171.

[21] Stanley B. Kurman, "The Hero as Politician," *The Gissing Newsletter*, IX (April, 1973), 1.

[22] Korg, 32.

[23] Yates, 20.

[24] *Letters to Family*, 172. See also Korg, 83.

[25] W. H. Mallock as quoted in *Literature and Politics in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. John Lucas (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1971), 184. See also W. H. Mallock, *Property and Progress* (London: John Murray, 1884), 93-4.

[26] The notion of a more prominent role in social matters for an enlightened aristocracy is traced from the time of Burke forward to the twentieth century by Raymond Williams in *Culture and Society*, 151. While Williams does not mention Gissing by name in this connection, it is clear that Gissing was a strong proponent of the idea.

[27] Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society*, 85, suggests that Carlyle was the first not only to use the word industrialism, but also the first to adumbrate "that structure of contemporary feeling" about it that Gissing seems to have inherited.

[28] Yates, 23.

[29] George Gissing, *Demos* (London: Smith, Elder, 1886; rpt. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1972), 127.

[30] Donnelly, *George Gissing, Grave Comedian*, 108.

[31] Yates, 24.

[32] Houghton, 209.

[33] Houghton, 210.

[34] Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *The Victorian Temper* (New York: Random House, 1951), 227.

[35] David Thomson, *Europe Since Napoleon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1957), 392.

[36] Quoted in Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Proud Tower* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), 35.

[37] The imperial idea is explored most fully by A. P. Thornton in his *The Imperial Idea and Its Enemies* (London: Macmillan, 1959).

[38] Holbrook Jackson, *Dreamers of Dreams*, 91.

[39] Williams, 85ff.

[40] Robert L. Selig, "Gissing's Major Period, Novels of the Middle Class," Diss. Columbia University, 1965.

[41] H. V. Routh, *Money, Morals, and Manners as Revealed in Modern Literature* (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson Ltd., 1935), 169.

[42] Korg, 32.

[43] Routh, 168.

[44] Yates, 56.

[45] Quoted in Ruth C. McKay, *George Gissing and His Critic Frank Swinnerton* (Philadelphia: Folcroft Press, 1933), 72.

2. "their awareness of craft"

[46] Ford Madox Ford, as quoted in Kenneth Graham, *English Criticism of the Novel, 1865-1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 113, n.2. See also Ford Madox Ford, *Return to Yesterday* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1931), 208.

[47] Richard Stang, *The Theory of the Novel in England, 1850-1870* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959); see especially 91-135; Kenneth Graham, *English Criticism of the Novel, 1865-1900* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965); see especially 97-139.

[48] Graham, 97.

[49] *Ibid.*, 113.

[50] *Ibid.*, 113.

[51] Henry James, "The Art of Fiction," in *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays by Henry James*, ed. Morris Roberts (New York: Oxford University Press, 1948), 12-13.

[52] J. K. Johnstone, *The Bloomsbury Group* (New York: The Noonday Press, 1954), 159.

[53] *Letters to Family*, 46.

[54] *Ibid.*, 175.

[55] *Ibid.*, 179.

[56] Henry James, *Theory of Fiction: Henry James*, ed. James E. Miller, Jr. (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1972), 18.

[57] *Letters to Bertz*, 215.

[58] George Gissing, "The Place of Realism in Fiction," in *Selections Autobiographical and Imaginative From the Works of George Gissing*, ed. A. Gissing (London: Jonathan Cape, 1929), 218.

[59] *Ibid.*, 220.

[60] James, "The Art of Fiction," in *The Art of Fiction and Other Essays by Henry James*, ed. Morris Roberts, 14.

[61] E. M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1927), 67-68.

[62] Norman Friedman, "Point of View in Fiction: The Development of a Critical Concept," in *Approaches to the Novel*, ed. Robert Scholes (San Francisco, California: Chandler, 1961), 126.

[63] George Gissing, *Workers in the Dawn*, 3 vols. (London: Remington, 1880; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1968), I, 1-2.

[64] Letters to Bertz, 145. The relevant passage is quoted above on page 5.

[65] Letters to Family, 166.

[66] W. C. D. Pacey, "A Study of the Reception of French Realistic Fiction in Victorian England and of Its Influence upon the English Novel," Diss. University of Cambridge, 1941. Pacey remarks on the disappearance of the editorial omniscience narrator, although he suggests that it occurs as early as 1884 with the publication of The Unclassed.

[67] Friedman, 129.

Chapter II

Phase The First

1. "Such loose baggy monsters"

[1] Thomas Seccombe, "Introduction," The House of Cobwebs (London: Constable, 1906), viii.

[2] The influence of the English novelists has been noted, although not very extensively explored by such critics as C. J. Francis, "Gissing and Schopenhauer," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 15 (1960), 53; and Samuel Gapp, George Gissing, Classicist, 2.

[3] Seccombe, viii.

[4] Gissing rather proudly quotes extensively from a letter he had received from Frederic Harrison. See Letters to Family, 79.

[5] The chapter is number II, "The Proletariat," in Swinnerton's George Gissing, A Critical Study (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923).

[6] Bennett is quoted as saying that Gissing " . . . seems never to centralise the interest. His pictures have no cynosure for the eye." Quoted in Swinnerton, 169-70. See also "George Gissing," in Critical Writings of Arnold Bennett, ed. Samuel Hynes (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1968), 162.

[7] Donnelly, 106.

[8] George Gissing, Isabel Clarendon, 2 vols. (London: Chapman, 1886; rpt. Brighton: Harvester Press, 1969), I, 229-30.

[9] Michael Irwin, "Cross Purposes in Gissing," The Gissing Newsletter, IX (January, 1973), 6.

[10] *Ibid.*, 10.

[11] At least one critic has succumbed to the narrator's argument. See P. F. Kropholler, "Gissing's Characters and Their Books," The Gissing Newsletter, V (April, 1969), 14.

[12] Korg, 81.

[13] Jacob Korg, "Division of Purpose in George Gissing," PMLA, 70 (June, 1955), 335.

[14] Donnelly, 122.

2. The Nether World

[15] Following the lead of Frederic Harrison (in a letter to his brother Gissing quotes *in extenso* from Harrison's letter in which novels of "the Assomoir class" are mentioned, see Letters to Family, 77-9), critics most often cite L'Assomoir. See, for example, Donnelly, 119; and an unpublished dissertation by Judith Walzer, "Class and Character in the Work of George Gissing," Diss. Brandeis University, 1966, 99ff. Yet it is difficult to pinpoint exactly the specific form of Zola's alleged influence, particularly when, as Korg notes, Gissing denied having read the French writer's work until later in the decade. (See Korg, 44.) It seems more likely that, as Gissing himself suggested, the qualities of his novels of the eighties resulted from his own view of life in general and of the poor in particular. That Gissing's evocation of the total effect of the environment on human endeavour is similar to the practice advocated by Zola in his essays (see "The Experimental Novel" in Émile Zola: The Naturalist Novel, ed. Maxwell Geismar (Montreal: Harvest House, 1964), 1-32) and novelistically rendered in such works as L'Assomoir, Nana and Germinal cannot be denied. It is, however, difficult to be more specific than this. What results from this view

is that Gissing's view of life was similar to Zola's, at least at this time, rather than that Gissing owed anything in any very specific way to Zola's literary practice.

[16] Robert Selig, "George Gissing's Major Period, Novels of the Middle Class," Diss. Columbia University, 1965, 21ff.; Walzer, 105.

[17] Sherif Nur, "The Art and Thought of George Gissing," Diss. University of London, 1950, 207; and Donnelly, 122.

[18] Nur, 185.

[19] Walzer, 103.

[20] George Gissing, The Nether World, 3 vols. (London: Smith, Elder, 1889), III, 211-12. All further references to the novel are to this edition and are cited by volume number and page in parentheses in the text.

[21] Jacob Korg, George Gissing, A Critical Biography, 111-12.

[22] Nur, 82ff.

[23] It is interesting to note that the money ear-marked by Michael Snowdon for funding his noble vision has been ill-gotten. But there seems to be no scruple on his part about using it for philanthropic purposes, whereas the counterfeit--'ill-gotten'--money of Bob Hewett is clearly to be eschewed and renounced.

[24] Donnelly, 119.

[25] Nur, 207.

[26] In The Experimental Novel Zola writes, ". . . it [the social condition] is the variable product of a group of living beings, who themselves are absolutely submissive to the physical and chemical laws which govern alike living beings and inanimate. From this we shall see that we can act upon the social conditions, in acting upon the phenomena of which we have made ourselves master in man. And this is what constitutes the experimental novel: to possess a knowledge of the mechanism of the phenomena inherent in man, to show the machinery of his intellectual and sensory manifestations, under the influences of heredity and environment,

such as physiology shall give them to us, and then finally to exhibit man living in social conditions produced by himself, which he modifies daily, and in the heart of which he himself experiences a continual transformation." See Émile Zola: The Naturalist Novel, ed. Maxwell Geismar (Montreal: Harvest House, 1964), 12. It is interesting to note that though Gissing seems to have shared Zola's ideas about the effects of heredity and environment, he was less convinced that merely by changing these the human condition could be ameliorated. Indeed, for all the exploration of the external conditions of human life in The Nether World, the one component which cannot be adequately quantified is the weakness of character. It is this in conjunction with the external conditions of life in the nether world which effectively defeat the attempts of those in the disadvantaged classes to better their lot.

[27] Korg, 51ff.

Chapter III

Phase The Second

1. "A new key"

[1] Donnelly, 124-25.

[2] Korg, 135.

[3] Nur, 207.

[4] Donnelly, 125-26.

[5] Letters to Family, 166.

[6] Donnelly, 3.

[7] Ibid., 156.

[8] Ibid., 156.

[9] Pacey, 295.

[10] As quoted in Donnelly, 125.

[11] James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (New York: The Viking Press, 1956), 215.

[12] Letters to Family, 166.

[13] George Gissing, The Odd Women (London: Macmillan, 1893; rpt. New York: W. W. Norton, 1971), 334-35.

[14] Donnelly, 156.

2. Born in Exile

[15] Swinnerton, 102; Selig, 111ff.

[16] R. L. Selig, "Part I of Born in Exile: Peak (and Gissing) at College," The Gissing Newsletter, VII (October, 1971), 1-6.

[17] Korg, 173.

[18] Jacob Korg, "The Spiritual Theme of George Gissing's Born in Exile," in From Jane Austen to Joseph Conrad, eds., R. C. Rathburn and M. Steinman (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1958), 248.

[19] George Gissing, Born in Exile, 3 vols. (London: A. and C. Black, 1892; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1968), I. 51. All further references to the novel are to this edition and are cited by volume number and page in parentheses in the text.

[20] Margaret Maison, The Victorian Vision (New York: Ward and Sheed, 1961), 275. See also R. L. Selig, "George Gissing's Major Period, Novels of the Middle Class," Diss. Columbia University, 1965, 110.

[21] Korg, "The Spiritual Theme of George Gissing's Born in Exile," 249.

[22] Ibid., 249.

[23] Selig, 146ff.

[24] Korg, *George Gissing, A Critical Biography*, 172ff.

[25] Among some of the similarities that might be cited are: the young social malcontents who serve as the central figures; the use of an omniscient narrator in addition to passages of what qualify as interior monologue; and the division of the respective novels into seven parts. Such parallels, while suggestive, do not in themselves prove conclusively the indebtedness of one writer to another.

[26] Walter Neuschaffer, *Dostojewsky's Einfluss auf den Englischen Roman* (Heidelberg: Anglistiche Forschungen, 1935), 16-22.

[27] Dorothy Brewster, *East-West Passage: A Study in Literary Relationships* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1954), 215.

[28] Korg, 174.

[29] *Letters to Family*, 166.

[30] Judith Walzer, "Class and Character in the Work of George Gissing," Diss. Brandeis University, 1966, 211-12.

[31] Robert Humphrey, *Stream of Consciousness in the Modern Novel* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1954), 4. The discussion of interior monologue in Chapter 2 of this book is also of importance.

[32] Donnelly, 165.

[33] *Letters to Bertz*, 153.

Chapter IV

Phase The Third

1. Novels of Fulfillment

[1] Donnelly, 166ff.

[2] In 1885 Gissing wrote to his brother: "It is fine to see how the old three volume tradition is being broken through. One volume is becoming commonest of all. It is the new school, due to continental influence." (Letters to Family, 166.) Yet another ten years passed before Gissing himself adapted fully to this change.

[3] In contrast to this view of carefully distinguished characters, Ernest A. Baker comments: "Gissing deals with character rather than characters, his Reardons, Milvains, Amys, and Marians being, at least primarily, examples of qualities or defects which are tested and inevitably compared in the battle of life." Ernest A. Baker, The History of the English Novel, vol. 9 (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1938), 146.

[4] Donnelly, 125.

[5] Baker quotes James as remarking with respect to Gissing that: "The interest would be greater were his art more complete; but we must take what we can get, and Mr. Gissing has a way of his own." Quoted in Baker, The History of the English Novel, vol. 9, 156, n.1. See also Henry James, Notes on Novelists (London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1914), 345-51.

[6] Donnelly, 184; Korg, 231.

[7] George Gissing, The Crown of Life (New York: Stokes, 1899), 200ff.

[8] George Gissing, Our Friend The Charlatan (New York: Holt, 1901; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), 146-47.

[9] Korg, "Review of George Gissing, Grave Comedian," by M. C. Donnelly, in Nineteenth Century Fiction, 2 (September, 1954), 147.

[10] Korg, George Gissing, A Critical Biography, 212.

[11] Donnelly, 186.

2a. New Grub Street

[12] Anon. Review, Whitehall Review, 18 April 1891, 19-20, in Gissing: The Critical Heritage, eds. Pierre Coustillas

and Colin Partridge (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), 169.

[13] Ibid., 179.

[14] Ibid., 187.

[15] Q. D. Leavis, "Gissing and the English Novel," Scrutiny, VII (June, 1938), 80.

[16] Donnelly, 156.

[17] Irving Howe says: "The book is not at all difficult, it is transparent, and to subject it to a 'close reading' in the current academic fashion would be tiresome. What New Grub Street asks from the reader is not some feat of analysis, but a considered fullness of response, a readiness to assent to, even if not agree with, its vision of defeat." Quoted in P. J. Keating, George Gissing: New Grub Street (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1968), 9. See also Howe's "Introduction" to New Grub Street (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962), v-xxi.

[18] R. L. Selig writes of what he calls "highbrow", "middlebrow", and "lowbrow", although he complicates the issue by trying to equate the terms not only with literary endeavour, but also with marital relationships. See R. L. Selig, "George Gissing's Major Period: Novels of the Middle Class, 1891-1894," Diss. Columbia University, 1965, 80ff.; P. J. Keating writes of "tradesmen", "artists", and "men of letters." See P. J. Keating, George Gissing: New Grub Street (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1968).

[19] George Gissing, New Grub Street (London: Smith, Elder, 1891; rpt. London: Eveleigh, Nash and Grayson, 1927), 10. All further references to the novel are to this edition and are cited by page number in parentheses in the text.

[20] Keating, 25.

[21] Ibid., 45.

[22] Ibid., 32.

[23] Selig, 104.

[24] Quoted in Gissing: The Critical Heritage, 183-84.

[25] Donnelly, 156.

[26] Keating, 57.

[27] *Ibid.*, 57.

[28] Selig, 92.

2b. *The Whirlpool*

[29] George Gissing, *The Whirlpool* (New York: Stokes, 1897; rpt. New York: AMS Press, 1969), 244-45. All further references to the novel are to this edition and are cited by page number in parentheses in the text.

[30] Donnelly, 183.

[31] Pierre Coustillas and Colin Partridge, eds., *Gissing: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), 30.

[32] *Ibid.*, 30.

[33] *Ibid.*, 31.

[34] Donnelly, 181.

[35] Colin Partridge, in writing of *The Whirlpool*, writes of what he regards as "a confusing mixture of conventional Victorian narrative and metaphoric transformations." See Colin Partridge, "The Humane Centre: George Gissing's *The Whirlpool*," *The Gissing Newsletter*, IX (July, 1973), 1-10.

Conclusion

[1] Donnelly, 201.

[2] Swinnerton, 169.

[3] W. C. Frierson, *The English Novel in Transition, 1885-1940* (New York: Cooper Square, 1965), 103. After quoting Swinnerton, Frierson blithely says: "Our interest is therefore with Gissing's vision."

[4] Korg, "Review of George Gissing, Grave Comedian," by M. C. Donnelly, in Nineteenth Century Fiction, 2 (September, 1954), 147.

[5] Quoted in Donald D. Stone, Novelists in a Changing World, 66.

[6] Korg, George Gissing, A Critical Biography, 259-60.

[7] Joseph J. Wolff, "Gissing's Revisions of The Unclassed," Nineteenth Century Fiction, 8 (June, 1953), 42-52. It is worth noting in this connection also that some extant manuscript material in Gissing's elegant but increasingly minute handwriting reveals little if anything about his methods of revision. As John Gordan points out, the manuscripts of Demos and The Emancipated, for example, are remarkably 'clean', and the marks of the compositor's pencil indicates that type was set from these copies. The lack of working papers which might have proved helpful is attributed by Gordan to Gissing's habit of tearing up discarded sheets. See John D. Gordan, George Gissing, 1857-1903, An Exhibition From the Berg Collection (New York: New York Public Library, 1954), 14ff. Michael Collie makes the same point about the manuscripts of other novels such as Isabel Clarendon, Thyrza, The Nether World, New Grub Street, Denzil Quarrier, Eve's Ransom and The Town Traveller. On the other hand, Collie suggests that the manuscripts of Born in Exile, In The Year of Jubilee, and The Whirlpool may be "of considerable interest" because of the various cancellations and emendations. See Michael Collie, George Gissing: A Bibliography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975), 25ff. Collie's commentary suggests that more extensive study needs to be made of the relationship between some of the manuscript material and the first editions of the novels.

[8] Donnelly, 217.

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